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ANCIENT EVIL

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Volume 6 Number 1



THE CAREER OF LOW-BUDGET EROTIC
HORROR AUTEUR DAVID DECOTEAU

Michelle Nordin
as Seen in many
issues in David
DeCoteau's horror
ANCIENT EVIL

Femme Tales

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**THE LUSCIOUS LADIES OF HORROR
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ATTRACTIONS F A T A L E

By Dan Scaferotti

●I've worked on **BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER** for four years and, enough already, it's time to move on," says gorgeous stunt woman Sophia Crawford, who doubled for series star Sarah Michelle Gellar. Crawford's resignation follows her guest appearance at November 2000, a British convention of located at a Radisson Edwardian hotel. "Jeff Pruitt, **BUFFY**'s stunt coordinator, and I enjoyed a surprisingly huge reception," continues the FF centurion [p. 1]. "The central theme was vampire in the media, and it was absolutely incredible. Many members of the audience had followed my earlier work in Hong Kong action films." Crawford, in fact, is renouncing her career as an actress. "I want to be back in front of the camera as an active player, not impersonating someone else. I've just been cast in **U.S. SEALS II**, which we're shooting in Bulgaria. I play a terrorist—the leading bad chick—and there's lots of action."

●Harris Comics has canceled the monthly *Vampirella* comic book, but the publishers are continuing to milk their voluptuous icon. Julie Strain has slipped into the crimson ensemble for a one-shot magazine, *Vampirella: Julie Strain Special*. To flesh out the contents, the B-movie babe offered her friends—all famous models—equal opportunity to

Julie Strain trades in her F.A.K.K. 2.0 for a crack at *Vampirella*. Tap into www.juliestrain.com for details.



She made a splash on the 50 FT. WOMAN & in **BLADE RUNNER**. Geryl Henrich is now playing **HIDE & SEEK** (You abducted by psychotics and it gets worse!).

squash into the trademark costume.

●The Canadian **GORD** has been peddled up by Trimark Home Video, which will debut the film comically as **HIDE AND SEEK**. Jennifer Tilly (S.4 & 7.8) and Vincent Gallo play a demented couple who abduct Daryl Hannah, transporting her to their basement, they fabricate their prisoner's death. "I haven't done too many horror films," said Tilly. "I did **BRIDE OF GLUCKY** and now I've done **HIDE AND SEEK**. It's not my aim to become a horror scene queen, but I think this film is different. It's more of a psychological thriller, a **SHENING** or **ROSEMARY'S BABY**. We all have different ideas on the film. The director, Sidney Funn, says it's **FARGO** esque. I think it's **BLUE VELVET** because me and Vincent Gallo are way out there in terms that we're so idiosyncratic and eccentric and bizarre. I think there's an edge, dark humor and sensibility in it."

Hannah, bound to a bed for much of her running time, describes her character, "Aime," as "sort of your typical, white bread perfect, upper-middle class woman who has a nice life. She has a great relationship. She's been trying to get pregnant with her husband, and they have some problems in that area. Other than that, her life is perfect until she gets kidnapped by this psychotic couple. Then she and the audience learn who she really is, when she has to face the most horrific, the most horrendous circumstances on a daily basis. You keep thinking, 'This has got to be the bottom, this

has got to be over, this has got to be the worst it can get' and it continues to get worse and more twisted. She finds her strength."

●Showtime's erotica/horror series, **THE HUNGER**, is accessible on the York Entertainment home video label. Episodes, produced by Ridley and Tony Scott, are compressed into three volumes, *Wicked Dreams*, *Soul for Sale* and *Worship*. The cast of the latter includes Chad Lowe as a virgin vampire and Sophie Shiro as a toothsome gourmet who savors French food.

●Actress/FF staffer Jennifer Huss plays a critical role in **BODY SHOP**. Directed by Donald Farrow (**BLOOD AND HONOR**), the American-French production chronicles a real-life felony that implicated into a massacre. The cast also includes George C. Scott as a John Waters veteran, and Marly Munroe. Ms. Huss, currently developing a comic book heroine, is accessible via her web site: www.jenniferhuss.com.

●Andrea Paga (**LEVIATHAN**) and former **WONDER WOMAN** Cathy Lee Crosby bottle a **BLAZE**. Director Jim Wynorski describes the film as "kind of a poor man's **TOWERING INFERNO**." Wynorski is also prepping a sequel to his **BARE WENCH PROJECT**. The cast will likely include Samantha Phillips (**THE DALLAS CONNECTION**).

●Angie Everhart (S.3 & 7.14) co-stars with Michael Madsen in **FM Entertainment**'s **A TIE STRAY**. Everhart plays a successful businesswoman whose old seduces in to a homeless man. Despite the

protests of her police detective/boyfriend, she insists that the devil should converse of her worth. Naturally, those issues...

●Stunt woman/FF cover girl Anita Hart (7.6) played dual roles in **THE STRAY**. "I doubled for Angie Everhart," she gushes. "I also play a cop. It was fun—I got shot, stabbed and incarcerated." Hart was also hired for **AFTER SEX** ("A comedy with Brooke Shields"), **RED LETTERS** ("I doubled for Nastassja Kinski"), **BLOW** and **THE DEVILS PREY**. Her latest assignment: **GHOSTS OF MARS**, directed by John Carpenter.

●The great American penis is making a comeback. For further validation, look no further than the renderings of artist Ed Tadiello. Among his repository of models is actress/writer Roseanne Michaels. "He wanted fun, campy, sexy, pin-up get stuff to bring back that pop culture into the mainstream," says Michaels, who supplied her own leopards print bra and panties for the photo reference shoot. "He shot two rolls of film of me in that outfit. He does his own photography for photo reference. He wants you to be very natural. He likes you to express who you are in the painting. Of course, I'm a little bit campy and amused so that came out in that pose."

The New Jersey-based Tadiello was introduced to Michaels by another artist. Three weeks later, he rendezvoused with the model in his Hoboken studio. "When I met Roseanne, I felt she was made to order for penis work," said Tadiello. "Basically, I just let her move around as much as possible. Roseanne's just campy and fun with a lot of energy. She has beautiful legs—exquisitely shaped legs for penis work."

The photo session produced two stunning illustrations of Michaels. The first, called simply "Roseanne," is a flirtatious pose in the leopard outfit with matching wrap. For "Strike 'N," the artist's second graphic illustration, Michaels pulled on a cigarette and fondled her hair. Her only attire was sheer pantyhose, partially unbuttoned—above the waist—with a spider web affection. "My attraction to it had a lot to do with the expression in her face," said Tadiello. "It was also the way her hair was falling down over her shoulders and breasts, and the way she is holding that strand of hair. The position of her legs and feet were just right for

that particular moment."

■ Coming in November, Roxanne Michaels & Jillean Mowbray (powerful in *THE PROGENY*) will be defrosting from the winter chill when they pose for *FF* in Rio de Janeiro. Both actresses will be guests of a sex fi conclave orchestrated by Forbidden Planet officer John Calvet.

■ *Playboy* has released *GIRLFRIENDS II*, another edition of their sapphic series. Players include "bondage/Bettie Page" diva Dita Von Teese. In a separate installment, Flower and Rachael Robbins play a couple of randy L.A. cops. Before pinning on her badge, N.Y. bombshell Robbins cropped her locks. "Apparently our segment had the biggest budget of the anthology," said Robbins while strolling down a Manhattan street. "We had real cop uniforms and real guns. There was even a weapons expert on our Los Angeles set. It was a top-notch, pampered experience. We shot in November and those nights are chilly even in L.A. Sitting on top of a cop car, naked in November, was a pretty chilling experience." The video also includes Playmates Kimberly Spencer, Kirsti Cliné and Tahara Couture.

■ Swashbuckling females are turning trendy. XENA, LARA CROFT and Sydney Fox (aka *THE RELIC HUNTER*) were the forerunners. Syndicated swashbuckler *Tessa Nevada* is the heir. After the death of her father, the beautiful Spanish noblewoman comes to the California of the great Dons only to find the land in the iron grip of a military dictator. The burdensome taxes he levies on the citizens are driving them to the point of starvation. In the best Zorro tradition, Tessa transforms into the blade-wielding QUEEN OF SWORDS, and sets things straight. The four-ling series is debuting on October 2nd. Tessa Santiago plays the 18th-century masked avenger. Filming was launched, last May, in Spain. Cuban-American Santiago was born in Miami and attended the University of Miami. To brandish those flashing swords convincingly, the youthful SW actress adhered to a rigorous training schedule.

■ Denna Spangler, former model and starlet (*GUNN*, *CARNAL CRIMES*), welcomes you to her multiple-channel website, www.firebetwork.com. Spangler has focused upon SCANDALS, her "Internet soap opera. And it's an exciting one. It's about the scandals of Eve-



Rachael Robbins plays a female swashbuckler in an Internet series. She's also cool in *HEAVEN & HELL*, "a vignette about Satan vs. mortal artists." Photos: Ole Solomon.

erly Hills and the things that go on there." Wearing triple hats as the show's producer/co-writer/producer, Spangler has assembled a canny cast, including bikini bombshell Tracy Dall (WAGN HIGH), Playboy Playmate Devin De Vezquez (SOCIETY) and Alie Moss (JAWBREAKER). "And there are actually several DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS who are in our soap—Denise Ames, Susan Sparr and our beautiful Hawaiian girl, Nina Spencer."

And then there's Julie Strain as Rae Hower, FBI agent. "Julie's like Charlie of CHARLIE'S ANGELS," Spangler smiles. "We're sort of the CHARLIE'S ANGELS of the Internet. We go around getting ourselves into piddles, and then solving crimes and dealing with drugs, sex, killing, all the normal things that soap operas deal with. In one episode called 'You



Peck,' I get abducted by my husband's evil twin brother...but I don't know it."

● Rolfe Kanefsky, director of THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE (01)—a pre-SCREAM lampoon, already regarded as a cult classic—has been helming cable-TV adaptations of illustrator Mike Manara's pulp fiction. But he's returning to the women medium with a blend of slapstick and sex: In titled PRETTY COOL, "It's AMERICAN PIE Meets ZAPPED! and WEIRD SCIENCE," explained Kanefsky. "It's an homage to those coming-of-age movies. In my film, a 17-year-old girl-chasing nerd is accidentally injected by an Internet experiment, it leaves him with the power of mind control. And you know what that means—lots of girl-fucker room-hoover scenes!"

The cast includes Alexis Thorpe ("She had a small role in THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND



At (clockwise) Scarlett & soap in cyberspace, dished-up by Darren Spangler (above); r) Cast includes Nina Spencer (above), q) w/ Susan Sparr, Alie Moss, Devin De Vezquez & Denise Ames. Top: Biller Beer her best Tracy Dall as a venge (photos, Lisette Yirinec)

ROLLWINKLE and graduated to a substantial role in THE FORSAKEN, a vampire saga directed by Joe Cardone for Screen Gems). Supporting cast includes Amy Blossoms ("An unprecedented comedic talent—she'll be a SNL regular by next year"), Cecilia Bergqvist and Summer Abaze.

You may sample Kanefsky's bikini burlesque of honor films like www.theresnothingoutthere.com

● Holy William Castle! Horror films are routinely voyeuristic, but the fetish is more overt than ever in www.WatchUsDie.com (yes, that's the film's title). The production is released right on the heels of a "peeping tom" versus that has infatuated prime time. Producer/director Keith Shenberg offers the following synopsis: "A female journalist keeps a vigilante watch on a website www.watchusdie.com

[And, yes, it's really lurid]. She finally decides to investigate the dormitory where the Internet show is broadcast. The 'dorm' turns out to be a creepy mansion that was constructed in the 1880s. Ten beautiful women, who occupy the house, are scrutinized—all day, all night—by no less than 45 webcameras that are scattered on the premises. One of the girls vanishes—then another—chase ensues. We shot the film in Cornwall, Pennsylvania on a villa that was erected about 125 years ago. Shooting went smoothly, though I have to admit that something is actually missing and unaccounted for—specifically, one of the actresses!"

The cast includes Jennifer Jansen, Erin Carroll, Jennifer Cooper and FF cover woman Amy Miller (8-15, optional Gownwoman photo). By the way, you're invited to the

dorm for an intoxicating evening of girls and ghouls. But you'll really need a few skeleton keys... and the first key is on the dorm website. Do you dare enter? BOG-HOO-HA-HA-HA-[cough]-HA-[cough, cough]-sorry, I do tend to get carried away at times.

● Okay, get a grip: a movie spin-off of another Internet website, (new) NANGELS.COM, is in development. The lascivious locale was created by Penthouse Pet Nicole Mariano, who organized a cadre of females fates to operate the site, including Laura Wachal, Brandy Miller, Zoe Paul (ELICIT LOVERS) and Karen Chasen.

● Penthouse Cruz is headlined in the aptly titled WOMAN ON TOP as Isabelle Oliveira, a woman who suffers from motion sickness. So severe is her malady that Isabelle must remain on top while making love! Fortunately, the goddess of the sea has infused Isabelle with an incredible knack for cooking (don't ask). When she discovers her husband is sampling delicacies in someone else's kitchen (if ya know what I mean), Isabelle splits from her Brazilian terrain and moves to San Francisco for a reunion with the goddess. That's right—you'll laugh, you'll cry, this film will become a part of you. Fox Searchlight is releasing the film in the U.S.

● A certain Amazon was introduced to TV audiences in an ABC movie succinctly titled WONDER WOMAN (1974). The film tressed the comic book's trademark costume. Cathy Lee Crosby, playing the title role, was clad in an ultra-conservative ensemble that looked like it was spliced from a convent. Fans rebelled and the vilification prompted

THE NEW, ORIGINAL WONDER WOMAN, another TV movie (1975). Voluptuous Lynda Carter, cast as the curvy crusader, stuck with the program (i.e. she squeezed into corsetry, cleavage-deepening outfit that replicated the D.C. Comics logo). The movie was spun off into a [1976-79] TV series. Originally set during World War II, the first season transplanted Wonder Woman to a more contemporary milieu (Carter's most memorable line: "No one can resist the golden lasso. It binds all who are enrobed and compels them to tell the truth"). Columbia House (1-800-438-2922) distributes VCR tapes of the WONDER WOMAN adventures, two episodes per video. A long-postponed big screen adaptation of the winged hotty is still in preparation.

continues on page 48



The scorching cast
of **NO ANGELS,
GOOD,** a website &
movie spin-off. L-r:
Lena Dunham, Zoë
Lister-Jones, Karen
Gillan and
Bridget Moynihan.

MICHELLE NORDIN ANCIENT EVIL SCREAM OF THE MUMMY

CRUSADING AGAINST ALIENS AND MUMMIES, THE BRAZILIAN ACTRESS—MESMERIZING ON MTV—DUNKS DEMONS ON “BUFFY.”

BY JASON PAUL COLLUM



It's difficult to fathom, but at just 19 years old, actress Michelle Nordin has already tallied a substantive volume of television, commercial and film credits. This may not seem extraordinary, unless you consider she didn't know a single word of English until seven years ago. Today, the actress retains not a trace of her Brazilian accent.

Born in Rio de Grande Sul (the southern tip of Brazil), the honey-dressed beauty, who exudes a delicious sense of humor, was raised in Rio de Janeiro, an all-American appearance camouflages her Swedish/Italian lineage.

When her mother, a stow-away, was transferred to the States, Nordin (whose

Nordin poses with Anton Palk on the *ANCIENT EVIL* set. Director David DeCotena describes the actress as "a complete sweetheart, absolutely adorable... a great screen presence."



"There are two different parts to MTV's UN-DRESSED: one with college kids that's explicit & one with high schoolers that's a lot tamer."

nickname is "Erickson") recalls, "I didn't know any English when I moved here. It was really hard for the first six months. I had no idea what was going on in school. I had to read children's books through the eighth grade to learn the language. It took a while, but I eventually picked it up. There are still words I struggle with on occasion, but most people think I'm American." She speaks softly in her native Portuguese, which arrests the attention of a inquisitive couple seated at a nearby table.

Nordin credits her classmates for her acclimation to American culture. She received a Catholic education in Brazil but a surfeit of attendance in L.A. parochial

Nordin poses for Joe Duenkel's ad. Also, "I don't like modeling. It makes me uncomfortable. I don't like having to be sexy. It's not me." © Nordin & Michael Lutz in ANCIENT EVIL.





"They all think I grew up as an innocent farm girl. When they put me into this BAYWATCH outfit, I got to be the babe. It was so hysterical."

schools prompted her enrollment at a Lutheran institution. "The kids were nice because they had to be," she smirks. "It was how they had been taught. But I definitely didn't fit in right away. I looked foreign. You know how you can always spot a foreigner? Usually by the way they dress or wear their hair. That was me. I'm grateful to a couple of friends who tried to teach me how to dress and speak. There was a boy named Brian who sat next to me in class and helped me out a lot. But I'd still get home from school every day and not want to go back."

Feeling ostracized by her peers, Nordin was determined to communicate: "It became my resolution, every year, to learn as much English as I could. There was a point where all I did was

Nordin is shot by Jan Deen, though she still insists, "I don't like posing in front of a camera." R: As "a greedy two-thumbs cheerleader in ALIEN ASS-SENAL"—not the typical bikini girl.



study the language, it was the only thing that I really cared about. I couldn't learn enough! Now I can't remember not knowing the language.

"I had a friend who was really popular and, because I hung out with her, I just fell into the popular group of kids. I got into cheerleading in seventh and eighth grade just because I wanted to experience what teenagers did in America. I guess that's where the valley girl reputation came from—I honestly didn't realize I was popular. We didn't have that kind of thing in Brazil, where it's just people who know each other—and either you like them or you don't.

"The whole teenage society of being popular, or being a nerd, is strictly an aspect of American culture. It's probably because, in Brazil, school is strictly for learning; there's no socializing. We didn't have sports and dances and cheerleading...and there's basically no real social functions involving school. Your friends are all made out of the classroom."

During the past two years, the once introverted student has appeared in a profusion of commercials. She later graduated to prime time visibility on an episode of *BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*, and a recurrent engagement on the MTV soap opera, *UNDRESSED*. "I never really thought I'd be an actress because I was so quiet," she muses. "I know I come off as being really self-assured but I'm not. I actually took some acting classes for fun. I just wanted to learn how to act. I had never planned to do it professionally. But, nevertheless, I wound up doing it professionally with the FOX Family Channel."

A chance meeting with a friend of a friend was the catalyst for her introduction with FOX, where she was hired to host segments for the Brazilian affiliate. Nordin admits to initially "totally freaking out, but I had been trained to become

RAPID HEART PICTURES

HE HELMED THE HORROR HONEYS OF THE '90s: DECOTEAU DEVELOPS A FRANCHISE FOR 2000.

"Something strange has been resurrected—an ancient evil whose time has come. Tonight, the screams of the dead will fill the night air."

Trailer blurb for "Ancient Evil: Screams of the Mummy."

Determined to focus on horror, sci-fi and fantasy, commerce that's tailored for teen audiences, director/producer David DeCoteau—abandoning his past pseudonyms, e.g. Jack Reed, Ellen Cabot, etc.—is applying his real name to films that, pending budgets, will fluctuate between union and non-union. He's currently searching for "the sort of fresh talent that we believe will professionally prosper. No half-baked talent."

DeCoteau recounts a casting session that transpired during his apprenticeship with Empire Pictures. "Back in 1988, Brad Pitt read for my film, *DR. ALIEN*. I had a feeling he would go on to bigger things, but I didn't trust those instincts. After he hit pay dirt with *THELMA & LOUISE*, I promised myself that if I ever felt strongly about an actor, I would promote them as much as I could and champion their careers."

Actress Michelle Nordin, who made her movie debut in DeCoteau's *ALIEN ARSENAL*, gauges the director



ANCIENT EVIL director David DeCoteau had no qualms about posing with a mummy designed by Jeff S. Farley & Christopher Bergschneider.

as "pretty amazing. He shot an entire movie [*ANCIENT EVIL: SCREAM OF THE MUMMY*] in four days—and it looks fantastic! He makes everyone feel really comfortable. He lets you create the character you want. If there's anything he doesn't like, he's very reassuring and discusses it with you. He trusts your talent."

DeCoteau intends to operate Rapid Heart Pictures not unlike yesterday's drive-in franchises, American International and New World Pictures. "Each movie will be an event," he insists. "We plan to do eight films per year and that's it. Not 25 one year and 35 the next. We're not going to be volume

conscious. Our films will be developed and properly mounted. If the script isn't ready, the picture will not be shot."

The entrepreneur, who divides his time between homes in Los Angeles, Canada and Romania, describes himself as "still a director for hire. I've recently immigrated to Canada, which has opened up additional doors. But I wanted to launch Rapid Heart Pictures to produce and control my own product and gain name and brand recognition."

The company's output will oscillate from direct-to-video release to theatrical and cable premieres. Approximating the promotional venue of *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*, DeCoteau will be tapping into the Internet's e-commercial sites. He's also developed a partnership with producers/directors Sam Irvin (*GODS & MONSTERS*) and David Silberg (*SKELETONS*). The union with Irvin "begins after seeing each other, for years, at film festivals, markets and on sets. We've been looking to do a feature together so when *ANCIENT EVIL* came along, which is Rapid Heart's maiden effort, it was the perfect opportunity. He produced it and did a fantastic job. I'm hoping he'll become a permanent part of Rapid Heart."

"I'm convinced there's a

need for our type of pictures, especially *ANCIENT EVIL*—it's a very old-fashioned kind of horror movie, much like a Hammer horror film. I'm not saying all of our features will be like this; every film is going to have a unique style. We'll concentrate mostly on horror but we also want to get into other facets of the industry, including television and merchandising."

Recalling his own baptism into the business, with shooting films on minimal expenditures, DeCoteau adds, "On occasion, I may do one little movie with a small budget which would be released unrated. It would have to be unique with an innovative style and story—something controversial or with an edge. I would probably produce and allow a new, young filmmaker to direct. I'd like to give others the same opportunities I received. I can take that chance."

"It's funny. People say the video industry is dried up right now, but I currently have over one million cassettes on the shelf. With sell through and rental, my product is out now more than ever."

DeCoteau declares that the controversial, relatively new system called "Revenue Sharing" is more of a blessing than most movie distributors had speculated: "At

Poster for *Rapid Heart Palaters* motion release, *ANCIENT EVIL*. "It's very much like a Hammer horror movie."

DAVID DeCOTEAU

"Back in 1988, Brad Pitt read for my film, DR. ALIEN. I had a feeling he'd do bigger things but I didn't trust my instincts. Now if I feel as strongly about actors, I will champion their careers."



ANCIENT EVIL. Nordin with *Artemus Affright*, whom the director describes as "another protégé of mine. I lost working with her, she'll do more films for me."

least 20,000 to 30,000 units of each title are out now, whereas in 1987 it was 5,000 or 12,000. It was a big video revolution back then, but retailers were paying \$50 to \$60 per copy as a flat fee to us, then would hope to make that money back in rentals. Now they pay \$4 per copy and both the stores and the filmmakers share the profits."

Some argue that if a movie doesn't rent well, the filmmaker suffers while the retailer makes a profit regardless. DeCoteau, however, notes a primary benefit is "the exposure, which is better now than ever before. For an up-and-coming director, who wants to be noticed, that's an asset."

Budgetary constraints prompt a radical reduction of shooting schedules. Not that DeCoteau minds: "It keeps my actors from waiting around. Everyone's constantly working. The crew loves it and I just like doing things fast. I hate producers and directors who waste time just for the sake of filling the days. There are

times when I need six days to shoot a movie, but four days is great."

"I couldn't imagine doing anything big in four days," exclaims Michelle Nordin. "But David moves along so fast, yet has control the whole time. It doesn't give a lot of time to build your character or work on your scene. Occasionally, it's a little more stressful because you want to try and get it all in just one shot. But that's how it is on stage. After all, you don't even have a shot at a retake in theater. It keeps you on your toes."

DeCoteau admits, "I don't pre-plan anything or work with shot lists or pre-block scenes. And I don't do advanced rehearsals with actors. Everything I do as a director comes up on set when it happens with a camera and crew. I must have complete spontaneity. All of my best films have been done that way." Not that his patience can't be derailed: "If I feel someone has an ulterior agenda, or wants to hurt the film in some way, then I will take

drastic steps to correct the situation."

Presiding over a 30-plus crew, DeCoteau's shoot on *ANCIENT EVIL* was adhering to a constructive production covenant. One day, however, the film's personnel grew nervous: the lead actor had not shown up for his call time. As the morning shifted into afternoon, shooting was postponed.

After nearly two hours of delay, it was discovered the missing actor was contractually obligated to remain, the entire day, at an unrelated photo shoot. He had previously vowed the gig would be wrapped-up no later than 11 a.m. With no time to spare, another actor, Trent Latta, was summoned to fill-in the vacated role. Latta promptly bid adieu to his job in progress and sped to the set. To the astonishment of all, he dropped directly into wardrobe and makeup, then to the set where he was handed a script for the first time.

Minutes later, Latta was spouting off his dialogue without a single gaffe. A relieved DeCoteau resumed his expedient pace, filming 22 pages of the day's scheduled shoot with two hours to spare.

The remainder of the film, partially fueled on special makeup effects officiated by Chris Bergschneider and Jeffery S. Farley, went off without a hitch. Filming concluded several hours ahead of time on Day #2, right on time on Day #3 and—on the result of a violent windstorm—lapsed only an hour overtime on Day #4.

ANCIENT EVIL's director couldn't be happier with the final cut. "I'm thrilled to death," exclaims DeCoteau. "The completed movie looks absolutely fantastic. [Director of photography] Howard Wexler made it look lush and just beautiful... plus, a most wonderful music score has been composed for the film. It's very suspenseful and very moody." □



"I really liked doing ANCIENT EVIL. Shot in only four days, it looks fantastic! But I can't watch scary movies! I just freak out."

someone else. I just tuned it out and did it. Acting is something I fear but I want to do it. So I force myself into character because I know I need to overcome my stage fright. I put myself into the situations. That way, I have no choice but to do it. And when I do, I love it.

"My mom is supportive, but my dad thinks I should be a doctor. It would make him feel better if he could tell people I was doing something he considers less frivolous. He always wants to know how much money I'm making. I host a nutrition show for SPORTV, a sports channel in Brazil, and he enjoys that. But he's happy as long as I'm happy. He's just being a dad."

Nordin's FOX experience was deployed into additional work, including hostess of the nutrition show, ALTA DENICAO (translating into HIGH DEFINITION, the series has been picked-up for another season). She was also offered a substantive role in Full Moon's ALIEN ARSENAL (1998), a family film directed by David DeCoteau. Cast as "Felicia St. Claire," the actress describes her character as "a goody two-shoes cheerleader. She wasn't the typical bitchy girl, which was nice. She and her friends find this arsenal in the school basement, and they discover these aliens plan to use it to take over the world. Naturally, it's the kids to the rescue."

Exempting a couple of roles, Nordin has not yet circumvented stereotype as "the squeeze" or girl-next-



A terrified Nordin
cowers from the
squeezing in a pulse-
pounding scene
from ANCIENT
EVIL. "[Director]
David DeCoteau is
amazing," notes
the actress. "He
brings the talent."

door: "That's what I'm always cast as. Everyone says I look like I'm from the Midwest. When I say I'm Brazilian, they don't believe me because they think all Brazilians look Hispanic. The truth is, there are all different nationalities raised there—Chinese, African—it's a big mixture."

Upon auditioning as "the shy girl from a small town" in an indie drama titled *THE DOORMAN*, Nordin lost the leading role to another actress; nevertheless, the producers were impressed enough to offer her an optional role as "a character who was the complete opposite of me. I wound up being the California girl who was 'easy' and outspoken."

Returning to Full Moon for *MICROSCOPIC BOY* (1999), Nordin was cast as "a Pamela Anderson-Loo-type. They put me in to this *BAYWATCH* outfit and I got to be the 'babe.' I thought it was hysterical. I really liked it." She shifted back into a more wholesome persona as "Rachel" in the Halloween, 1999 episode of *BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*: "I was cast as a college student who plays that Halloween game where you feel the grapes and they're supposed to be eyeballs—but I see them turn into actual eyeballs. I freak out and chaos ensues. The story was about this demon who exploited one's deepest fears, and locked everyone in this house."

"It was wonderful. I didn't really get to talk to Sarah Michelle Gellar very much, but Seth Green ['Or'] and Nicholas Brendon ['Xander'] were so nice to me. They introduced me to people and made me feel really comfortable."

Admitting she's star-struck, Nordin recalls her "ultimate encounter" was with Brazil's Xuxa, a host of children's television. "I grew up watching her. I actually went to one of her shows



Director David DeCoteau converses with leading ladies—Michelle Nordin (l.), Rikke Sævius (c.) & Marique Parent—for plenty of popcorn, Pepsi and late night horror pic.

and when I saw her, I can't even describe it. I was just speechless."

Earlier this year, Nordin reunited with David DeCoteau for *ANCIENT EVIL, SCREAM OF THE MUMMY*, which was shot under the director's production banner, Rapid Heart Pictures. "Michelle is absolutely adorable," says DeCoteau. "She's a complete sweetheart and has a great on-screen presence."

Shooting the entire movie in four days wasn't as nearly as problematic for Nordin as the fate of her character (again, the nice, naive girl-next-door). "When I did *ANCIENT EVIL*, I didn't know my character was going to die until the day we shot the scene. It sounds weird, but I was actually excited about it because I'd never died before. I was sure I was going to die on *BUFFY*, however, when I survived, I was kind

of disappointed. So once I found out I was going to die in *ANCIENT EVIL*, I spent the whole day wanting to know how it was going to happen."

An insider on set recalled, "Michelle got really excited when she saw how graphic Michael Lutz's death scene was going to be, but seemed hummed when she found out there wasn't as gruesome." Nevertheless, when Nordin is dimly spotted in the fern shower, her scene applies a literal meaning to "blood bath."

"I really liked doing *ANCIENT EVIL*," smiles the actress. "But it was so different. I can't watch scary movies. I absolutely freak-out! But as an actor, it's not really scary when you're doing it. You say the lines, then go on to the next shot. You have to try and scare yourself into believing it's really happening."

In contrast to the working environment on *ANCIENT EVIL* ("I had so much fun"), Nordin's other genre-related role was "really scary. On the *BUFFY* set, they had set up all these flashing lights around me and I had to hit the glass, and pound for my life, and he terrified that this demon was going to get me. I was so freaked out by those scenes that I was crying."

Renewing her ties with the TV medium, Nordin was cast in MTV's *UNDRESSED* as Catrina, a high school virgin who assumes her boyfriend is cheating on her because she won't put out. "There are actually two different parts to the show. There's one with college kids that's really explicit, and another one with high schoolers that's a lot tamer. I'm in the high school cast."

Abstention from the more risqué content is something of a blessing to the actress, who professes a dislike for modeling, a vocation that she started to sample at age 14. "It makes me uncomfortable."

I don't like posing in front of a camera. Everybody always says it's the same as acting, but I can guarantee you it's not. I don't like being posed and asked to do uncomfortable things. I don't like having to be sexy. It's not like me. I just don't see myself as being very sexy. Maybe that's something I need to work on with a psychiatrist."

"Actually, *UNDRESSED* is a very cute show. I knew some of the actors, who've done a lot of other projects, were like, 'This is so crappy,' but I don't take anything for granted. I just love working and don't think about the outcome until I see it. Every job is a learning experience. I'm happy with my career and if I never get another acting job, I'm pleased with everything I have to show for it. I never even thought I'd get this far."

Nordin attributes her suc-

"BUFFY was really scary. I had to hit the glass & pound for my life. I was so freaked out by those scenes that I really cried."

ness to "putting acting first. Honestly, you have to love doing it. I'd advise aspiring actresses to avoid a lot of partying. It's a hard business and you're going to get put down a lot. But just keep going. There's a lot of work available for young actresses, especially right now. So be determined, don't give up. If you miss getting a part, remember there's always something better coming up."

The actress' own goals include "working with Meryl Streep, Robin Williams or Anthony Hopkins. I'd also love to get involved with a couple of relatively fresh comedy series". I'm really looking forward to pilot season...And I'd also like to start doing bigger features."

In regard to the latter objective, Nordin's peers concur that "it's only a matter of time." □

At: "When I say I'm bisexual, they don't believe me because they think all bisexuals look Hispanic. Truth is, there are all different orientations." **By:** Michael Lutz in ANCIENT EVIL.







DAVID DECOTEAU

RAPID HEART'S LOW-BUDGET AUTEUR

OUT OF THE CLOSET, OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM,
HE INTRODUCED FEMMES TO FANTASY GENRES.

By JASON PAUL COLLUM

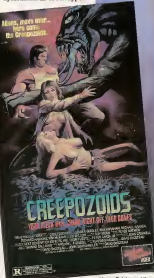
Throughout the 1990's, a legion of directors were delegated to helm Full Moon's depository of horror screenplays, among the most frequently credited are Ellen Cabot, Victoria Sloane, Richard Chasen, Jack Reed, Julian Breen, and more recently, Eric Mancini and Martin Tate. Not-so-ironically, all of the aforementioned directors were born on January 8th, 1962, and all of them hail from Portland, Oregon. All were adopted at birth. All moved to Los Angeles at age 18 to pursue film careers. And all of them are David DeCoteau, whose alter egos are hooked to genres that pendulously swing from horror (SHRIEKER,



Finding 1. DeCoteau & his ensemble (Michelle Nordin, Britta Stevens & Jonique Pineda) number party-on Peeping. 2. After peeing w/ DR. ALVIN & spacewalker Ken Hall, DeCoteau directed Linnea Gumpel and Ginger Lynn Peeling. 3. "Winger got her S&M card for it." 4. Seeking eye to KILLER EYE. 5. DeCoteau's BEACH BAKES 6. Sarah Roberts and Tina Hoffman.



CURSE OF THE PUPPET MASTER), to sci-fi geared to the family trade (ALIEN ARSENAL, PREHYSTERIA 5), to softcore threaded with some sci-fi props (BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND, PETTICOAT PLANET), to softcore sans the sci-fi like (NAKED INSTINCT, DEADLY EMBRACE) to hybridizations of sex appeal



and slapstick that earned cult adulation for its female casts (NIGHTMARE SISTERS, SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIMEBALL BOWL-A-RAMA)...

"There are three reasons I use pseudonyms," offers David DeCoteau (pronounced Dekton), seated in his Studio City home. "Number one, this is the only industry which penalizes you for working too much, when you do, you're considered a hack. The fewer credits you



Lynne Gulley and Ken Akshem (left) in CREEPOZIDS. ("That was very interesting because we got to stand in a kiddie pool with water dripping on us," recalls Gulley). R. DeCoteau wrapped the sci-fi film (budget: \$76,800) in 16 days.



have, the more people think you're new. It's a business which loves new, fresh talent.

"Number two, I'm a member of the Directors Guild of America [DGA]. I'm now under a special contract with them, which allows me to work non-union. But before the agreement, I wasn't supposed to do non-union pictures. The fact is almost all of my features were non-signatory to the DGA's require-

ments.

"Number three, some of my movies were just so damned bad I didn't want my name on them [laughs]. The hudgets on some of those were unbelievably low—often non-existent—or there was too much producer interference. I wasn't always allowed to blossom to my full capacity, which I felt was unfair." He has even shot the *Videozone* documentaries, tagged to Full Moon's horror films, but omitted a credit to lose disclosure of his prolificness.

"Ellen Cabot" supposedly died a few years ago. DeCoteau prefers to euphemistically address the demise of his alter ego as "put to rest. She, as well as Julian Breen, Jack Reed and the others, are entirely made up. There was a rumor at one time that Ellen Cabot was an old high school girlfriend of mine. I was actually responsible for that because, at the time, I was still in the closet and didn't want anyone to know I was gay."

Blonde bombshell Linnea Quigley, groomed as DeCoteau's star player—with *MURDER WEAPON*, *CREEPZOOIDS*, *THE GIRL I WANT*, ad infinitum—was among the few insiders privy to the director's alternate lifestyle. "Dave does have a good sense of humor," Quigley smiles. Color it occasionally dark. "When we were shooting *DEADLY EMBRACE* [Quigley played the doomed girlfriend of a jock stalked by a psychotic housewife] he laughed while I was being tortured! There were some scenes where I'm tied up and being beaten and hysterical, and I'd see him out of the corner of my eye trying to hold back from laughing. But he was like family, always fun...and quite shy. We did this French TV show and he was so nervous to be on camera I love his laughter, and he has a cute little butt."

DeCoteau admits to "cleaning clean" because "I've just started my new company, Rapid Heart Pictures and I

DAVID DeCOTEAU

"Some of my movies were just so damn bad, I didn't want my name on them. Budgets were unbelievably low...often non-existent...or there was just too much producer interference."



1. Linnea Quigley in *NIGHTMARE SISTERS* (budget: \$8,000). "It was the funniest time we had on a set," says Quigley. "We were scheduled to make the film in 4 days. On day #1, we shot 28 pages." 2. DeCoteau helms his first genre movie, *DREAMMARE* (original title: *SUCCESS*). He paid \$100 for the script.



want a fresh start...[chuckles] besides, there's so many sites on the Internet, which link the pseudonyms to me, it's no longer a big secret."

Growing up in Portland, 10-year-old DeCoteau—whose adoptive mother passed away from lung cancer—became impassioned with film upon screening *WILLIE WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*. "It knocked me over! I knew right then I wanted to make movies." As he grew older, he developed an admiration for Britain's Hammer horror films and Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe movies.

"Corman was definitely my biggest influence," says DeCoteau. "He was a filmmaker who headed his own company, and made gloriously wonderful features for almost no money. He even turned down an offer to run MGM because he wanted to start New World Pictures. When I was personally introduced to him, Corman said, 'So, I hear you're beating me at my own game!' I could have died. It was such a compliment, especially from him."

DeCoteau's peers, in fact, include B-filmmakers. "I consider Fred Olen Ray [ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD, HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS] to be the king. I will worship at the temple of Fred Olen Ray as long as I live. And there's no director in this business who loves what he does more than Jim Wynorski [SINS OF DESIRE, CHOPPING MALL]. When Jim is directing, there's nothing better."

Flashback: Applying his experience as a projectionist in high school to L.A. theatres, DeCoteau "saw audiences reacting to *HALLOWEEN* ['78] and *FRIDAY THE 13TH* ['80]. They were these little low-budget movies which had sold out showings for nine months! People went to see those in droves, and were screaming and yelling and jumping. You'd stand in the hall with a new group of patrons waiting to get in. They'd hear



CREWPHOTO: DeCoteau w/ Linnea Quigley & Co. Fr. Kim McKamy & Quigley. McKamy, "who refused to do nudity," later turned into porn star, Ashley Sims.



the people in the theater screaming with genuine terror and their regretful faces would reflect, 'What are we getting ourselves into?' It was amazing.

"I feel sorry for today's generation who grew up watching these theatrical movies on video. They need to be experienced with an audience. It was a completely different effect, with people literally jumping out of their chairs. It was so inspiring."

Determined to be a director, DeCoteau's enthusiasm was infectious with just about everyone—excepting his dad, a gravel plant foreman. "He thought it wasn't the best choice for me to make. He would have rather I settled down with a more 'steady' and 'honest' job. When I moved to Los Ange-

les and got a job, and only had to borrow \$200 on one occasion, he realized it was the right decision—especially when I started giving him money and bought him cars. His only complaint in that I don't come home enough... we're very close."

Upon arriving in Hollywood, an 18-year-old DeCoteau landed his first studio job with New World Pictures, the franchise developed by his idol, Roger Corman. His boss was James Cameron, then an anonymous filmmaker ("Jim treated a B-film like an A-film," recalls actress Thelma O'Connell). "He worked as second unit director on one of my films, *GALAXY OF TERROR*, which was shot in two weeks. I'm hardly surprised

ASSAULT OF THE KILLER BEMBO: director Anita Rosenberg (l.), posing with her sister, dressed posing from producer DeCoteau ("I think highly of her talent.")



DAVID DeCOTEAU

"WILLIE WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY knocked me over. Right then, I wanted to make movies. Roger Corman was a big influence; he made wonderful films for almost no money."

he moved on to the likes of *TITANIC*."). DeCoteau also fraternized with production secretary Gale Anne Hurd, who later—upon organizing Pacific Western Productions—produced films helmed by Cameron, including *ALIENS*, *THE ABYSS*, *THE TERMINATOR* and the latter's '91 sequel.

Performing variable duties, DeCoteau cut his teeth in the model shop, casting department and production office. The fledgling director and the New World ensemble prepped *GALAXY OF TERROR* (1980) and shot second unit special effects for John Carpenter's 1981 release, *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*. Though elated to be active in films tailored for drive-ins—a business that was rapidly fading with the advent of the VCR—DeCoteau moonlighted in another enterprise that, until now, he was reluctant to divulge.

While assisting on the construction of sets, a 19-year-old DeCoteau became acquainted with a cameraman who was recruiting an extra set of hands for *DOLING IT*, a gay adult film

that would be shot over a weekend. Nearly broke, DeCoteau agreed. "I met an amazing filmmaker named Sal Grasso [a.k.a. Steve Scott]," he recounts. "He taught me how to make a movie in two days and still make it look like a legitimate movie."

Grasso, who died three years later of complications from AIDS, instructed his protégé, "...no matter what type of movie you're making, or budget you're working with, you have to do the best you can at all times. You have to respect what you do."

"Those were important words," sighs DeCoteau, "...and I've never forgotten them."

Matter of fact, DeCoteau insists he learned more in that single weekend than during his entire tenure at New World. After a few additional features, he worked for William Higgins, an adult industry icon, at Catalina Video. "Subject matter aside," he asserts, "I learned everything about the film business. It was hands-on training...the best type of film school. After working for more than two years as a member of various crews, DeCoteau burned out from what is only termed as "over penetration." He returned to mainstream features in a string of jobs that included caterer, grip and production assistant. Tallying B-film credits, DeCoteau worked on *ANGEL* and *TUFF TURF*, in addition to Ken Russell's *CRIMES OF PASSION* (1985).

But *SUMMER JOBS*, an HBO movie, proved so "heretofore an experience," that DeCoteau nearly vacated his filmmaking vocation



Sheree Stewens, Lynzee Ungayig and Michelle Bauer are the NIGHTMARE SISTERS. "We all got to play different characters," says Stewens. "I got to play a mad, a little girl and a dominatrix. The three of us girls had to really carry the film, and there was not a lot of rehearsal." © The four gapes between Bauer and DeCoteau

"They worked us 20 hours a day and the director, who had just done Burger King's 'Where's the Beef?' spots, took way too much time to do everything. Worse yet, the cameraman was dreadfully slow. It just dragged on and on every day. But I learned how to treat the actors. They hate waiting around, it uses up all of their energy. Since then, I swore I would never abuse my crew that way and vowed to never shoot beyond 12-hour days unless absolutely necessary."

Renewing his ties with the adult industry, DeCoteau delivered his screenplay, *Making It Huge*, to producer Terry LaGrand. DeCoteau volunteered to direct the film; LaGrand approved. "If I ever win any awards, I will thank Terry LaGrand because he is the first person who ever let me direct," DeCoteau, then 21 and functioning professionally as David McCabe,



turned into one of the adult trade's hottest tickets.

By 1986, "David McCabe" had directed over 40 features that were divided between the heterosexual and homosexual markets. His *PLAY SAFELY*, "the first gay feature in history to use condoms," earned rave reviews. Later, during the same year, a McCabe spoof titled *WHEN A STRANGER COMES* also drew loudatory notices ("McCabe shows his true talent as a director and delivers an entertaining, well-acted film," wrote an *Advocate* Men critic).

But the expansion of the AIDS epidemic, and premature deaths of his co-workers, prompted DeCoteau "...to feel like I was contributing to a business which had no respect for its actors." Hence, the filmmaker founded Cinema Home Video, sinking \$30,000 of his personal bankroll into the company. DeCoteau was offered a script titled *Suc-*

cubus, submitted by a writer as a work sample. DeCoteau intended to shoot the movie with his own funds, then later raise the remainder of the revenue to wrap post-production. But Dolan Don, Head of Development for Emptee Pictures, was equally impressed with the script. And she had other ideas...

"I'm at this meeting with Debra when she says, 'Charles will be right in,' recalls DeCoteau. "I was like, 'Oh my God!' Charles Band is a legend in my eyes. I had grown up watching his productions like *TOURIST TRAP* (1979), *MANSSION OF THE DOOMED* (1975), *LASERBLAST* (1978)... tons of them.

"Well, Charlie walked in and I was in awe. He couldn't have been more lovely. He said, 'Make your picture, bring me the unedited footage and I'll pay you your \$30,000 back. I'll pay for the rest of the picture, post-production, promotion and I'll

BRINKE STEVENS

"I always thought David should be doing major budget films, but I get the impression he truly loves independent movies. He is a true fan of horror, and yet he can see the humor in it."



T. Stretch out for *THE IMF* (released domestically as *SODOMITE BAMBI*) in *THE SUMMER BOWL A-RAMA*. **B.** DeCoteau, helming Linnea Quigley, recalls, "It is the only film I directed where I was continuously drunk—many people were. It had an open bar, we put it to good use." **L.** Michelle Bauer's *Intuition* scene



rect *CRKEPOZOIDS* (1987), the director's first collaboration with Linnea Quigley, whose graveyard striptease turned *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD* (1985) into a sleeper hit.

"I first met David when he worked as a caterer on a short film called *THE CAYTONSVILLE ELEVEN*," says Quigley. "I was excited to work with him. There's no huge 'I'm a director' ego. He's not into himself. He's a good businessman and he talks about stuff besides movies. He even had vegetarian food for me every day, and warm Sparkletts water for my lastly shower scene in *CRKEPOZOIDS*."

Wrapped in 15 days, the \$70,000 movie was filmed in the abandoned studio of Hustler photographer Suzz Randall. The film—a blend of critters, slime and skin—reunited DeCoteau with Kim McKamy, who made her film debut in *DREAMMANIAC*. "Ironically," remembers the director, "Kim refused to do any nudity. She was very shy and an all around sweet person." McKamy later transformed herself into X-rated starlet Ashlyn Gere (aka Kim Patton), whose films—*SODOMITY SEX KITTENS*, *BUSH PILOTS*, *LAD IN HEAVEN*—were about as demure as their titles.

"During a screening of the dailies," recalls DeCoteau, "Charlie Band looked at me and held up ten fingers. I asked what it meant and he said, 'Ten picture deal.' I nearly fell out of my chair. We went upstairs, he drew up a contract and opened a \$100 bottle of Dom Perignon champagne and we drank it out of Dixie cups. The next day, the cover of *Daily Variety* read in big bold letters, 'CHV 10 PIC PACK DEAL WITH EMPIRE' [Cinema Home Video partner] John Schouweiler and I went crazy. I was only 25 years old!"

"Whenever Charles had big picture deals, I would be the slave to the market and make the smaller horror, erotic, high concept T&A



pay you a director's fee plus a piece of the profits. If I like it, you'll keep making movies for us."

Production began four days later, though the title of *Succubus* was modified to *DREAMMANIAC* (1986), capitalizing on Wes Craven's *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* franchise. Band was content with the results and hired DeCoteau to di-

movies... whatever was hot. I rarely did an 'A' movie for him, but I was constantly working."

His first film under contract was 1988's **SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIME-BALL BOWL-A-RAMA** (European title, **THE IMP**). A forerunner of **WISHMASTER**, the premise involves college kids who—upon entrusting a malicious genie from its incarceration within a bowling trophy—are granted wishes which backfire in grisly fashion. In addition to Lannen Quigley, the cast included Michelle Bauer and Briake Stevens, all of whom would be indelibly linked to the genre.

Stevens, who later hosted DeCotese's four-part documentary **SHOCK CINEMA**, notes that, "David is one of the most competent directors I've ever worked with. I've always thought he should be doing major budget films, but he doesn't seem too interested. I get the impression he just loves independent filmmaking."

"He's one of the most relaxed and low key people I've ever met. I remember



Briake Stevens (top, r) recalls that, while shooting **SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIME-BALL BOWL-A-RAMA** (l), she dislocated a knee ("It was not pretty," says DeCotese, "Briake had to take 4 days off but is a trooper"). R, Stevens in **NIGHTMARE SISTERS**.



be bad to fire the entire camera crew after our first day of shooting. It was a big deal, yet it happened so smoothly and efficiently that we were hardly aware of it. He has an amazing ability to get things done without major hassle. He never loses his temper or blows up on set. He gives his actors the right amount of direction, without being

heavy-handed. He's a true fan of horror, yet he can see the humor in it."

Michelle Bauer, subsequently cast in DeCoteau vehicles like PUPPET MASTER III and DEADLY EMBRACE, acquitted herself not only as a B-movie sex kitten but as a thoroughly credible actress and sterling comedienne. "David has a keen sense for people," says Bauer. "There's a side of him which is completely understanding. He's more relaxed than most directors, and likes to have fun. When he was under pressure, it didn't seem to affect the cast. He kept it under control. We were having fun as friends. It never seemed like we

DAVID DeCOTEAU

"Charlie Band held up 10 fingers. It meant '10 picture deal.' We went upstairs, he drew up a contract & opened a \$100 bottle of Dom Perignon champagne; we drank out of Dixie cups."



DR. ALLEN (formerly I WAS A TEENAGE SEX MUTANT); Linnea Quigley and Ginger Lynn Allen ("It is the most enjoyable film I've done," recalls DeCoteau, "though NIGHTMARE SISTERS & VODOODO ACADAMY are close behind"); Michelle Bauer played a hot chick (N) and performed on a short double (A)



of young co-star Andras Jones in the room next door. He even dumped his mattress over the hotel balcony, irrationally screaming, "I'm in my sexual prime!" Andras went on to become a rather famous folk singer.

Stevens experienced her own trauma, "dealing with another actress who clearly felt threatened by me and

spared no punches while shooting our fight scenes. She pushed me down so hard, I dislocated my knee, which I had to pop back into place myself" (DeCoteau recounts, "It wasn't pretty. She had to take four days off, but was a trouper...did her job without complaint.")

Flying furniture and torn ligaments notwithstanding,

the set was infused with a party panache. "It's the only film I've directed where I was continuously drunk," chuckles DeCoteau, "—many people were! It had an open bar that we put to good use."

"It's one of my favorite films," says Quigley, "because I played a tough girl and kept my clothes on. It's fun to be mean."

As SORORITY BABES wrapped, DeCoteau was offered an opportunity to make NIGHTMARE SISTERS through his Cinema Hema Video label. CHV had been designed as a production service company for Empire, but branched out to other companies. The productions were excessively low-budgeted and always shot in Los Angeles with CHV's full time staff and on site camera equipment. Any monies earned from one production were automatically rolled over into the next.

The budget of NIGHTMARE SISTERS, however, made the average Bowery Boys picture look like an exercise in extravagance. Shot for \$8,000 on a four-day schedule, the film reunited DeCoteau with Quigley, Bauer and Stevens. The central setting was the vacated house of DeCoteau's partner, John Showalter.

"When David offered me four days of work on it, I had no idea he planned to shoot the entire film in four days," explains Stevens. "He promised it wouldn't be unreasonable hours, 12 at most. And he was absolutely right, miraculously, he managed to get it all done, on time and at a comfortable pace, without a problem."

The admiration is mutual. "The only reason that movie got made is because of Linnea, Brinke and Michelle," explains DeCoteau. "They're the most professional actresses I've ever worked with. They are disciplined, know exactly what they're doing, confident and absolutely lovely. It was made specifically as a vehicle for them."

The plot: A trio of out-



were working at all."

Nevertheless, production of SORORITY BABES—shot during evenings in a San Diego mall and adjacent bowling alley—was sometimes grueling. "There were personal conflicts among [some of the cast]," recalls Stevens. "The late Robin Koehnle Stille (SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE) drank way too much on the set, and was always bawling the crap out of Linnea in their fight scenes. Poor Linnea was constantly applying muscle rub to her many livid bruises. And she had to deal with the teenage angst

casts (i.e., ugly ducklings) are magically turned into gorgeous, randy vixens. They titillate—and then waste—a fraternity of college jocks. It's a *tour de force* for the actresses (sample the Twister scene, with Bauer negotiating the game in a fat suit).

"Being the consummate professionals that we are, we had our lines down perfectly," says Stevens. "We usually need scenes in one take. There were some extremely long master shots where the camera doesn't move, but you don't really notice it when you watch. Dave certainly had a master plan and it worked."

Bauer pegs NIGHTMARE SISTERS as her favorite DeCoteau film. "It was when we were approaching our peak, and filming was still fun. There was one scene where we had this guy tied up on a bed. David asked us to really have fun with him, but the guy didn't know what we were going to do. The element of surprise was a lot of fun for all of us. Another bit, where I swallowed the banana whole, was creative. And then there was the bathtub scene..."

"It's probably the longest

R. The mesmerizing Michelle Bauer is a veteran of DeCoteau movies, including LADY AVENGER (w/ with DeCoteau & Peggy Sanders), DEADLY EMBRACE, PUPPET MASTER II, etc.





bathbub scene in history," picks-up Stevens. "I've never timed it, but I think it was close to 10 minutes. But then, when you've got me, Linnea and Michelle naked in a bubble bath—and lovingly washing each other—who's counting the seconds? I don't think any of our fans complained." (The same actresses reconvened, a couple of years later, to shoot more



conservative footage for a TV release. All of the nudity was trimmed, the bathtub scene was entirely deleted and replaced with a padded sequence of the femmes, clad in negligees, teasing balloons on a mattress).

Released by Transworld, the film is estimated by DeCoteau to be "reasonably successful"; nevertheless, he admits that the distributor branded the sale of a mere 1,200 units as a flop. Sold to another company which has since declared bankruptcy, NIGHTMARE SISTERS has turned into a scavenger hunt for collectors. "Fred Olen Ray has been importing videos from England and distributing copies himself," says DeCoteau, "but that's probably the only availability at this point."

DeCoteau subsequently produced ASSAULT OF THE KILLER BOMBOS (1988), a romp directed by Anita Rosenberg about another trio of femmes who, framed for murder, make an exodus to Mexico. Released theatrically five years prior to THELMA AND LOUISE (1992), DeCoteau suspects



Top, left: Barbara Eden was often cast in DeCoteau's movies, including ASSAULT OF THE KILLER BOMBOS (l, with Christine Whitaker) and DR. ALIEN (R). "Liz was wonderful. She's an adorable human being w/ a great heart, who's also a fabulous actress."

44) had David over for dinner numerous times. We've shared a good friendship off the set. He never made me feel like he was above me. He's sweet & wonderful...I adore him & always will."



Behind-the-scenes shot of Linnex Quigley in DeCoteau's **DRACULA**. "David laughed when I was tortured in the movie! But he's funny, always!"

there is a connection between the films: "The creator must have seen BIMBOS and was inspired in some way, whether consciously or not. There are just too many similarities. I mean, right down to the car they drive and the characters names and certain plot points. It's amazing."

Though the film has drawn cult adoration, DeCoteau's memories of the shoot are not positive. "It was the first movie I didn't have complete control over. We hired a new director whose abilities I was very suspicious of, and I didn't approve of her on set etiquette. I do think it's probably the best picture Empire made. It had a true vision, the girls were adorable, it was very funny and clever."

"Unfortunately, I let my ego get in the way. I wanted complete control and Anita was taking advantage of the crew's emotions, so they weren't doing anything I requested. I do think she should have gone onto a career as a director. I look back now and think very highly of her talents. But I was upset because I wanted to direct it and cast Linnex, Michelle and Brinke as the leads. That was the original idea."

DeCoteau confirms that the actresses who held the film together were, in fact, equally satisfying choices. "Elizabeth Kaitan was wonderful. She's an adorable human being with a great heart who's a fabulous actress. Tamara Souza was a sweetheart. And Christina Whitaker was suspicious of the title. I think she was uncomfortable with how quickly we were making it, so she kept to herself. She did a very good job, though."

The film's title originally belonged to a slasher spoof that was later released as **CEMETERY HIGH** in 1989. "The title had been pre-sold and there was a lot of buzz about it," says DeCoteau. "It was a hot title. But the finished movie was so bad, they couldn't release it. Kenneth J. Hall patched up

CEMETERY HIGH as much as possible and it was released straight to video."

Elated with the Rosenberg out of Bimbos, Empire Pictures launched an ad campaign on MTV and—certain the film would be a commercial hit—released the comedy to over 80 theaters. Alas, as DeCoteau reports, "It came out against too much competition and bombed. It was the last picture that Empire released theatrically."

Boxoffice duds had eroded the Empire. As DeCoteau was directing his fifth feature, **DR. ALIEN** (1988)—the cast included Bauer, Quigley, Kaitan, Judy Landers, Ginger Lynn Allen and Edy Williams—he was dis-

patched the following communique: "...the bank has just shut down the entire company and seized everything. But they don't know you're shooting this picture, so just keep rolling and get it in the can before someone finds out."

"Nobody on set really knew," says DeCoteau, "and we wanted to keep it that way. It turned out to be the most enjoyable of any film I've done. The cast was just a blast. Ginger Lynn was a peach, she received her SAG card for doing it. I believe it was the first movie she did after she left the porn business."

Launching Full Moon the day after his Empire folded, Charles Band utilized DR.

ALIEN as a bargaining chip to strike a lucrative distribution deal with Paramount Pictures. DeCoteau figured it was time to focus on his own. During the following year, he churned out a profusion of direct-to-video features, which were routinely cast with Bauer and/or Quigley. His surplus of 1989 releases included **GHOSTO BLASTER**, **DEADLY EMBRACE**, **LADY AVENGER** and **MURDER WEAPON**.

He also supported a number of indie filmmakers, including J.R. Bookwalter, Timothy O'Raw and Brett McCormick. DeCoteau describes them as "extremely talented. They worked under the most arduous conditions with budgets so low that I'm embarrassed to reveal them. Tim's **GHOUL SCHOOL** turned out terrific. He's an amazing producer and director who could make a nothing budget look like a big budget feature. Brett's films were reasonably successful, and J.R. did what nobody else could do with budgets that small."

"The features were typically shot on video, which we'll never do again. I think it's a great experimental format for a young filmmaker but, no matter how talented or creative, it shortchanges them. I'm also not saying it can't be successful. **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** proved it can, but I also think it's a fluke and will never happen again. I just believe movies should be shot on film. That's the format which benefits it most, and I made 12 s-o-v movies to prove my opinion. They're all available from E.I. Entertainment and that company's president, Mike Russo, is a genius. I am so impressed with how he's built his company up so quickly. He's a gifted innovator."

Flashing back to the late '80s and early '90s, DeCoteau rhapsodizes about the then unprecedented genre sovereignty of Linnex Quigley, who pioneered the "sex begets violence syndrome" with a surfeit of sex, showers and slash. "When



Linnea Quigley (l) co-produced *MURDER WEAPON* w/ DeCoteau. The film included scenes from *NIGHTMARE SISTERS*.

Linnea would enter a convention," says DeCoteau, "she would be swarmed. The fans stopped whatever they were doing and would hound her. She was royalty, their queen." A few years ago, however, rumors circulated that the friends had split. It all had something to do with DeCoteau offering Quigley a contract to work exclusively for his company

(the only exemptions would have been "outside" offers that exceeded \$30,000). Quigley would be weekly recompensed, whether or not her employer shot a feature. But when the actress declined the offer, DeCoteau terminated the relationship.

"That's not at all true," DeCoteau exclaims. "I don't remember the exact details, but my goal was to not let

Linnea overexpose herself. I wasn't doing it to be selfish. She was working for a lot of people at the time, and I wanted to keep her off the market as much as possible for her own good. But she had a bad manager and it didn't work out. In all honesty, it was never the big deal that other people made it out to be. I'm not at all upset with her decision. I re-

spect her for it."

So what has precluded the casting of Quigley, Bauer and Stevens in DeCoteau's post-Empire films? "Remember," he reminds me, "in most of the films I've done in the past ten years, I was a director for hire. I have to get actors approved and if the producer says 'No,' I'm not at liberty to hire them. But I do try. I put Linnea in *BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND* [1994], Michelle in *NAKED INSTINCT* [1993] and Briake in the *SHOCK CINEMA* series.

"I haven't done a lot of stuff with them because I haven't found an opportunity. That's not saying there won't be an opportunity soon, I do plan to work with them again. The *SHOCK CINEMA* series was popular so I'm planning to continue the series with Brinke, if she'd consider hosting them again. She's a smart, very talented writer and has a great screen presence."

His camaraderie with Bauer remains unimpaired. "I've had David over for dinner numerous times," smiles Bauer. "We've shared a good friendship off the set. He's never made me feel like he was above me. He's sweet and wonderful. I adore him and always will." Bauer recently withdrew from retirement to transplant her tempestuous flair into *LITTLE MISS MAGIC*, a family film directed by DeCoteau's pal, Fred Olen Ray.

A phone call in 1990 reacquainted DeCoteau with another old friend. "While I'd been making films like *LADY AVENGER*, Charles made *PUPPET MASTER* and *SHADOWZONE* [1988]—both without me—and they did phenomenal business. He wanted to do a science fiction movie with me called *CRASH AND BURN*."

DeCoteau produced and Band directed the \$1 million saga which matched 40-foot robots with Megan Ward, who later resided in *MEL-ROSE PLACE* (Megan was a doll, one of the nicest and sweetest actresses I've ever

met."

When CRASH AND BURN earned substantial profits, Band appointed DeCoteau the head of his production division. DeCoteau produced TRANCERS II: THE RETURN OF JACK DEATH, which starred Helen Hunt, and PUPPET MASTER II: the latter film evokes "dual" memories, including contretemps with its director, the late David Allen. "He was a wonderful director," says DeCoteau, "but I wish I could have produced the picture for him with a 90-day shoot and \$10 million budget. Unfortunately, we had 24 days and \$1 million and David went way over schedule and was very undisciplined."

"David's relationship with Charles went back over 20 years. His priority was to make the film he wanted to make at all costs. I was put into an extremely uncomfortable situation where our relationship became so volatile that he and I rarely spoke afterwards. It's unfair, because he was a genius. He was an Academy Award nominee [special effects, YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES]. He was the best at what he did and he's truly missed because he was a great talent."

The 1990 release generated even more sales than its popular predecessor. DeCoteau recalls, "Charles came into my office and said, 'PUPPET MASTER II just shipped 48,000 units. I need a Part 3 yesterday!' So we decided to do a prequel and make it a period piece set in Nazi Germany. We called C. Courtney Joyner, who wrote a fantastic script, and I directed it with an \$800,000 budget in 18 days at Universal Studios."

PUPPET MASTER III: TOULON'S REVENGE (1991), cast with a legion of veteran character actors (Richard Lynch, Sarah Douglas, Walter Gotell and Guy Rolfe), not only turned a hefty profit but earned DeCoteau the best reviews in his career. Band wanted to get the ball rolling on Part

DAVID DeCOTEAU

"Films had to have R-ratings, but they made them incredibly potent & we'd have to cut it all out. We shot 20 extra minutes of BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND to replace all the cut footage."



7: Erotic thriller director Sean Sussman (left) and Chris Wolf (right) in DeCoteau's TEST TUBE TEENS FROM THE YEAR 2000. 8: Starlet for DeCoteau's Webcam Sexer vehicle, NAKED INSTINCT. 9: The filmmaker on the BLONDE HEAVEN set with Julie Strain and Co. "Julie is one of the most exciting women in the business."



4, but DeCoteau "was so burned out, I decided to take time off from Full Moon." Returning to CHV for a couple of years, DeCoteau limited his agenda to "work-for-hire gigs like STEEL AND LACE (1991) and NAKED INSTINCT (1993)." But a phone call from Charles Band persuaded him to supervise Full

Moon's "erotic label," Torchlight Entertainment. As producer and/or director, DeCoteau's prolific input for the budding company included THE HUNTRESS, BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND, PETICOAT PLANET, TEST TUBE TEENS FROM THE YEAR 2000, CASTLE QUEEN, etc. One of his favorites is BLONDE

HEAVEN (1995), a modern vampire vignette starring Julie Strain, Michelle Bauer and Monique Parent. "Monique was an absolute sidesplitter," relates DeCoteau. "She had the entire cast in stitches. There were scenes where all this sexual activity was supposed to be happening and, usually, the atmosphere can be heavy and tense. But Monique just calmed the entire production and kept everyone at ease. I loved working with her."

"And Julie Strain is the best! I loved her because I connected on a level I've never had before with an actor. She would look in my eyes and tell me exactly what I was thinking. And I'd do the same to her. I think



we were related in a past life. It seemed we already knew each other when we first met. Julie is one of the most exciting, sexual, vivacious, stunningly beautiful women in this business. She absolutely loves what she does, you can see it in her face. Unfortunately, we last touch since BLONDE HEAVEN. But I'd definitely love to do another picture with her."

The films were successful but DeCoteau fumed over an overindulgence of sex

scenes that often counterbalanced the plots: "Complaining with our Paramount contract, the films had to have 'R' ratings. But Charles insisted on making them incredibly potent, then we'd have to cut everything out. So we ended up with these movies which were neutered and had no plot or substance. Entire scenes had to be cut from the erotic pictures. BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND had 20 minutes of new footage added to replace the amount which had been cut out."

Upon discharging his head of general production, Band asked DeCoteau to "take over for a few months" while a replacement could be engaged. During this period, DeCoteau plunged into the production of family features, doing double duty as producer and director on PREHYSTERIA 3, released through Full Moon's Moonbeam Division. He also shot FRANKENSTEIN REBORN, an innocuous film tailored for Goosebumps aficionados.

After producing some modest hits, Band flew DeCoteau to Romania for a string of films that were shot back to back. Upon his return, DeCoteau was informed of bad news: Paramount had split from Fall

DeCoteau and John Waters met, Mink Stole, in LEATHER JACKET LOVE STORY ("John is such a visionary").



LINNEA QUIGLEY

"I love Dave's laughter. He has a cute lil' butt. There's no huge ego. He had vegetarian food for me every day, and warm Sparklett's water for my lusty shower scene in CREEPOZIDS."



DeCoteau & Linda Blair in PREY OF THE JAGUAR. "She is more beautiful than ever. I've never been more star-struck when I met this queen of the B-movies."

Moon, prompting an indefinite postponement of production. Retreating to CHV, DeCoteau once again freelanced as a director for him. He's proud of SKELETONS (1996), which "starred Dee Wallace Stone and Ron Silver as a couple who move from the city to this little community where a gay man is accused of murdering his lover. As the story evolves, it's clear he didn't and that not only does the town look down on homosexuality but has a history of ethnic cleansing and deadly racism as well. It affected a lot of people who saw it. It's very powerful. It had one of the longest shooting schedules and biggest budgets I've ever had, but I was dealing with film stars [e.g. James Coburn and Christopher Plummer] and lots of locations and complications. It was huge, with a 90 member crew and trucks everywhere. I just didn't enjoy myself. It was too stressful."

One of DeCoteau's 1997 releases, LEATHER JACKET LOVE STORY, starred Mink Stole, William Butler,

Nicholas Worth and a gathering of hyperactive drag queens: "When we called Mink Stole to do it, we were sure she'd turn us down. To my delight she accepted! She even came to the premiere and brought John Waters with her. I could have died. John is the ultimate cool guy, such a visionary."

During that same year, DeCoteau shot PREY OF THE JAGUAR and he grudgingly admits some faint admiration for the film's star: "Linda Blair is the one person I was completely consumed with when I met her. I was so star-struck, I couldn't speak. I've worked with a lot of big names but I've never been more star-struck than when I met the undisputed queen of B-movies. I met her for lunch before we started shooting and was basically gushing and embarrassing myself. Linda is more beautiful now than ever before, and has an incredible body! She's never been a better actress. She's amazing. Her movies have played in every

country in the world. She's a legend. Plus, she made one of my all time favorite movies ROLLER BOOGIE."

Until recently, ABSOLUTION, DeCoteau's little known self-fiction, somehow fell through the cracks. The cast included Jaime Pressley, Justin Walker, Mario Lopez and Richard Grieco. The director was later relieved to learn that his film would be broadcast on Showtime. ABSOLUTION was a ratings coup, retaining viewership, from the preceding SCREAM 2, in 8.2 million households! "I never saw it coming," exclaims DeCoteau. "It's almost unheard of for a low-budget, B-movie to hold on to that strong of an audience—to not lose any of it. Definitely a great moment for me. Jaime Pressley is stunningly beautiful, an amazing talent and a joy to work with. She's on JACK & JILL right now and does a great job. I hope she remembers me when she becomes a huge movie star. Mario Lopez is my favorite male actor and a dear friend. I'd walk barefoot over broken glass to work with him again. He's the sweetest, most professional, loving guy. I adore everything about him."

Postscript: David DeCoteau has, once again, rendezvoused with Full Moon. "Charles Band called and asked if I'd do a couple horror films for him." A "couple" eventually stretched into CURSE OF THE PUPPET MASTER, THE KILLER EYE, SHRIEKER, ALIEN ARSENAL, TOTEM, TALISMAN, RETRO PUPPET MASTER, WITCHHOUSE, VOOODOO ACADEMY—11 in all—with budgets oscillating between \$60,000 to \$200,000, and shooting schedules variably limited from 18 to only three shooting days. "CURSE OF THE PUPPET MASTER was shot in eight days for \$200,000," notes DeCoteau. "I wasn't very happy with the outcome. Some casting choices were poor and I'd already done everything which could be with those puppets."


Nevertheless, CURSE was a success, so Band pitched PUPPET MASTER VII. "The series had been stretched pretty thin by that point," admits DeCoteau. "But I figure I've been lucky to make a living making movies. Full Moon has been one of the few companies to make these kinds of films and do well with them. But I still didn't know where we could go with the plot."

"During one meeting, I found out the puppets in the original PUPPET MASTER weren't the original designs! Charles told me the ones used were evolutions of entirely different puppets. He showed me the original conceptual poster for the first movie with these designs. They were so frightening and macabre that I said, 'Charles, these are what you should be using!'" Special effects technicians Chris Bergschneider and Jefferey S. Farley created the refurbished marionettes that were cast in RETRO PUPPET MASTER, another prequel that chronicles the genesis of the little monsters.

Earlier this year, DeCoteau launched a new millennium with the formation of his own company...but that's another story (and, come to think of it, it's on page 11) □

Karen Russell (5), who graced with Madonna (DICK TRACY) and Belle Meurer, co-starred in DeCoteau's DR. ALVIN (5), with Michelle Bauer & Eddy Williams) and BRIDE OF VAMPIRE.





SPIDERS SIREN LANA PARRILLA

IT'S '50S MONSTER MASH WITH
LEGS! BATTLING THE STREETS,
STEREOTYPES AND SPIDERS.

PROFILE BY CRAIG REID

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENICE DUFF





"Lana is full of
piss and vinegar!"
says phofeg Dan-
ice Delf. "She's
beautiful, sexy—and
even sultry than
daisy." Pardo:
Lana Pardo ver-
sues the SPICEYS.



During the 1980s, she launched her career pitching Cocos Puffs on TV commercials. But Lene Marie Christina Parrilla has shifted from cereal to SPIDERS—we're talkin' big, hairy, critters—in a film directed by Gary Jones, who previously inflated MOSQUITOes into the size of Buicks.

In a classic case of bad timing, I sneaked myself outside the Los Angeles Convention Center just as Jones called for "Action!" I was instantly awarmed by hordes of panicked citizens, who were screaming in a myriad of dialects. It turns out the mob was running from a guy who was carrying a pale patchboard: a green "X" had been painted in its center. After four more takes, a crew member tips me off that the "X" will be substituted, in post-production, with a CGI-generated, 80-foot spider. Nevertheless, a monolithic, mechanical creep-crawly is in the wings for cutaway shots.

Right on cue, Parrilla sneaked into the back of a jeep, blissfully unaware of the presence of its cadaverous passengers. Taking a

"I could see Lene [P] as a sexy kick-boxer," says photographer Denise Duff. "She was in her way." • The director of SPIDERS describes Parrilla [P] as the "Puerto Rican Ringo Starr."



flying leap down an elevator shaft, she landed on a giant web and came face-to-face with a six-foot spider that she's hungry for a human repast "Cat!" As Parrilla was strapped into a body harness—she was precariously dangled upside down while trying to fire a missile into the monster—I cut to the chase...

"Lana, what have you got yourself into?"

"I haven't a clue," she sighed. "I had no idea I'd be doing action/sci-fi thrillers. I've done lots of theater and comedy. I'm good at that. But I never imagined this play Marcie, a college student reporter who is highly fascinated by UFO's and extraterrestrials, and I get involved in this disaster that took place in outer space. She's an outsider but she's a leader and a strong woman. She's not Hispanic and I play her as a regular white American girl. She's a survivor and tough. I identify with that part...I'm a survivor."

Half Sicilian and half Puerto Rican, Parrilla was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. "It was tricky growing up with that mix. Ironically, since I get mostly Latino parts, my Spanish has improved. I grew up with my mother for half my life and with my father, who passed away five years ago, for the rest of it. He was Puerto Rican and very strict. It's sometimes difficult to get along with my mother. I still hold a grudge for some of the things she's done. But slowly, as I'm maturing and getting older, I'm learning that she's a human being..."

"Anyway, I moved out here in Los Angeles to live with my mother because I just needed to get out of Brooklyn. It was getting hard there and I didn't think I'd graduate from high school. I was this hoodlum street rat, one of those bad kids in the street...I had to get out of Brooklyn."

"I finished high school out here and went to junior college for a short time, but

LANA PARRILLA

"My agent sends me out on all Latino roles...I love to play Latino, I'm proud to be Latino. But we're all trying to survive out here and I've no need to be stereotyped to love my culture."



Director Gary Jones demonstrates to Parrilla how to waste SPIDERS. "Gary is such a pleasure, always ending no matter how much bullshit he had to take."

I've never been into school. I'm a smart girl with the streets but, in a weird way, I feel educationally deprived. Throughout school, I was going through family issues and ran away from it. Now, I'd like to educate myself more, so I'm reading more books and developing my vocabulary and things. I'm also getting more into acting. I love the sense that you're being God, creating your own person. You can learn facets of life through your characters. Like I've just learned a lot about Argentina in preparation for a film called VERY MEAN MEN, which stars Martin Landau and Scott Bakula."

The 22-year-old Parrilla made her TV debut at age three when her aunt, actress Candy Arizona, cast the ingenue in a Coca-Cola commercial. "I was close to Candy growing up and always looked up to her. She was so full of life and dressing up, and the makeup, hair and the jewelry...I loved it and wanted to be in it. So I did this commercial just sitting there eating this stuff."

It wasn't until 1995, when Parrilla was transplanted to Los Angeles, that she rekindled her interest in acting. Further developing her apprenticeship on stage, she garnered pivotal roles in *Othello*, *Grease* and *Golden Boy*. "I was doing a play last February and a director named David Matthew Barnes saw me. He loved me and cast me in *FROZEN STARS*, my first film. It's about these four teenagers who have to make important decisions about family issues, sexuality, drugs, alcohol—things that occur at an age of transition when we are becoming an adult. The film tries to state that Latin people are worth more in society than what society labels them as. I prove that we can succeed. But I just don't want to be cast in Latino roles and get that label. My agent still sends me out on all Latino roles. Look, I love playing the Latino and I'm proud to be Latino. As Lana, I carry more myself as Latino and not Southern although I come across more like an Italian. But we are

all trying to survive out here, and I've no need to be stereotyped to love my culture. This is also why I like my Marcie character in *SPIDERS*, because I'm not even supposed to be Latino..."

An actor clad in an L.A. officer's uniform waved at Parrilla. It turned out to be Stephen Brooks, the film's screenwriter (*THE MANGLE*, *SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION*), who was moonlighting as an extra...

"It was initially called *SPIDERS*, then *COBWEBS* and now back to *SPIDERS*," explained Brooks. "It was originally a story about a farmer in Peru who discovers this thing in a tomb. Although that has changed, it's still a story about this woman fighting a huge spider. It's a mix of homage to the 1950's 'big bug' movies, and a modern movie like *ALIEN* with Ripley being the lead. In this case, we have Lana Parrilla, in a sort of Sigourney Weaver and Jennifer Lopez look."

So what exactly is *SPIDERS* about? The government is covertly researching zero-gravity experiments—blending alien DNA with spiders—on a space shuttle. Chaos ensues: the shuttle crash lands in the middle of nowhere. Collegiate reporter Marcie has been listening to radio transmissions and smells government conspiracy. Abetted by a few fellow journalists, she finds the crash site as well as a giant mutilated rat and demolished astronauts. *Flash forward*: congregating in a multilevel, underground facility, the investigative reporters realize—too late!—they're sharing space with a famished, Gargantuan spider.

"What's frightening is that you can't reason with it," continued Brooks. "It has limited mental ability but it knows what it does well—and that's going after something smaller than itself. This 30-foot killing machine won't give up, it never gets tired and it just keeps coming after you."

"Gary Jones, the director,

in an encyclopedia of old 50s horror films, but we didn't want it to look like we were ripping them off. It's literally half way between *THEM!* and *ALIEN*. *ALIEN* is an old-fashion horror flick, but it's hi-tech with a female lead. *SPIDERS* has a modern sensibility on an old genre. So what's the film's point? No matter how crazy you sound, you can still be right. Marlee sees conspiracy everywhere. She won't be right all the time but when you deal with something out of the range of normal human experience, most people just close their minds, but hers is open. She's the kind of person you need when unreal things happen, she's the person you want there because she can get past the disbelief."

Traversing to an adjacent exterior set, I spotted Leslie Harter posing outside her trailer for photographer Linda Tinfena. Last time I bumped into the actress, she was cast as a futuristic femme fatale/assassin in a sci-fi actioner, *DARK NOVA*. She remembered it fondly—

"I've been fighting for my money from that production," hissed Harter. "They didn't want to pay the overtime I had worked. But I had proof and I won. It was

Josh Green shoots Parilla, a heroine who declines rescue. "She's a leader as well as a survivor, a tough lady."



GARY JONES, DIRECTOR

"For Lana's character, I didn't want a BAYWATCH blonde babe. I need someone who could act, not scream. Lana has the Sigourney Weaver thing & then the Jennifer Lopez-ethnic thing."



Parilla and violas are supervised by *SPIDERS* director Gary Jones. "Watching giant bug movies, I hoped-as in how we shot I need \$20 million to do creatures."

just bad karma. But I've seen what I did on that film and I like it. I recently finished a film called *BLOW BACK* with Mario Van Peebles. It's about a guy sent to prison. I'm on the jury that convicts him, he escapes and murders the jurors. So he tortures me, makes me do this phone call and then I get a knife in my back and die. It's fun doing that...but I don't have the desire to do it in real life.

"I've got Polaroids that show gruesome shots of me dying. People don't like to see them but I think they're kind of neat. I've also done this film called *SACRIFICE* with Michael Madsen, where I die again. I play a guy who's doing an abortion. A nurse who works in the abortion clinic gets killed. It's like *BLOW BACK*, a guy kills all the people who've had abortions. I was in prosthetic makeup for three hours, because they had to build up my neck so they could have the vein pop underneath."

Adhering to her track record, Harter revealed that

she's also deep-sized in *SPIDERS*: "I play Dr. Emma, a scientist who does experiments for the military so I kind of get what is coming to me. A shuttle crashes, one guy survives, he looks like the Elephant Man, we try to save him. Before he dies, a mutated spider crawls into his mouth, then his stomach explodes and the spider comes out. When it reaches a size of two feet, it webs me, then bites me, then webs me again. The special effect guys squirited this beinous stuff all over me but it looks good, then I die."

"They did this cool shot afterwards where I'm totally webbed up, then they hung me upside down in a harness and I had to fall into frame all webbed and bloody. I'm already dead and partially eaten. That was totally fun because I hate spiders. They used a couple of different, realistic puppets...I could hear the crew laughing off-camera, because it was so believable, and I'm there screaming my lungs out. Even though they are fake,

your mind takes over. I just hate things with eight legs."

"What was really shocking was that we shot at the Camarillo State Mental Hospital, which has been closed for just a few years, so the equipment is still in there. The scene I shot, where the spider gets me, was done in a room where they used to do lobotomies. I didn't freak out, but you can feel this weird, dark energy. This place also has all those padded rooms and its own morgue. It's this safe, self-contained eerie world, perfect for this kind of film. It sets the mood with its atmosphere."

Exiling herself from a routinely fatalistic milieu, Harter is "doing a comedic cabaret show with three other women. I'll also be starring in a stage play called *Old Sins, Long Shadows*, where I play a wild woman from Kentucky. When I'm not fighting with my family, I'm fighting a strip mining company that is trying to steal our land."

As Ms. Harter resumed her poses for Tinfena, I was greeted by KNB Effects technician Bob Kuraman, who was grooming one of his amazing, colossal tarantulas for a night on the town. "We built three versions," he explained. "There's a two, a six, and a 30-foot version which is also mostly CGI except—as you can see here—we built this giant head and some of its legs. The six-foot version was a cable and rod puppet, the legs were manipulated by guys on the side with rods and it took ten people to operate it. Its circumference was really 10 feet around. We built those things out of blocks of rigid foam, the same way I did the giant crocodile in *FLAT DOG*. Our initial model was supposed to be a tarantula with wolf spider eyes, and we kept the wolf spider eyes. We first built a two-foot marbete and 'shrunken' it with some interesting surface details and things."

A security guard swung under the head and appendages of the 30-

feet mock-up spider. A comfortable of cool, she looked her gaze into a face-off with the monster. Kurzman threw a switch and "tekussAAAA—" a loud blast of air spewed out of the spider's mandible, the guard promptly performed a vanishing act.

"So once our machete was approved," continued Kurzman, "we molded it and made several versions of it—a cable version, a floppy version for spider stunt work and reverse shots, and a cam-driven version. In JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE, we made regular sized, motorized tarantulas so this was just a bigger version of that model. We used the two-foot, motorized version to kill Leslie Harter off. It required a lot of takes to have the spider walk up her body. That was actually difficult on her because it was tough to manipulate the spider, crawling across her 'bumps'—uh...and other irregularities like on the floor. She gets webbed up and dragged off."

By early morning, when downtown traffic was building up, Kurzman attached the spider to a large truck. Seated in a separate truck's flatbed, he opened switches that made the enormous insect crawl to life: it hissed, arched its back, wiggled its pedipalp and brandished fangs. When the truck was driven forward, each "leg" was manipulated by assistants to simulate a "running" pattern. Large explosive squibs—bags of green goo—were strategically implanted in the spider's body; hence, when bullets impact its back, a spray of emerald "blood" is discharged. Gary Jones yells, "Action," entirely cognizant that he's afforded only one take on this busy shoot. Traffic and public buses screech to a halt to watch the strophopede assassin do its stuff.

Jones, a veteran TV director—credits include XENA, HERCULES, HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS, SPY GAMES—attributes his alliance with SPIDERS to "Bob Kurzman, who recom-



Daring SPIDERS puts Persi in hot water. "When leaving the audition, Lance told me that she knew she had the job," says the director. "She was the best actress, and she's got a lot of drive. I think that teens can associate with her."

mended I talk to Nu Image because they are doing a whole bunch of these giant monster films. I called, and five minutes later, they called back and executive producer Boaz Davidson asked me in to talk. We actually talked about MOSQUITO and giant genre films of the '50s like EARTH VS. THE SPIDER, THEM! and TARANTULA. We watched them and I keyed in to what they were looking for, and how we didn't need \$20 million to do CGI creatures. I mean, we have CGI creatures but on a lower budget. But I explained that we could get away with mixing mechanical, CGI and real spiders. It's a real mix, like '50s style films, using old and new techniques and coming up with a fun story the audience could bang their bat on.

"In SPIDERS, I wanted to take these kid reporters and see how the survivors are going to come out and also scare the audience. It's really Marlee's story and how she believes and follows up on something. She learns these dark secrets, sees her friends die and we see how this changes her.

"The budget on this film was much higher than on my previous film, MOSQUITO, but the stakes are also higher. We have many locations, helicopters, shooting downtown at night, mechanical spiders and even had script rewrites one week before shooting which, although it didn't change the action, it changed the emotional content. This was the real challenge.

"I love this genre of film, but it was never my initial intention to do 'giant bug'

films. But, in a sense, this is a return to my roots. As a kid, I went to these films. But after I watched about eight or nine of these spider films, I got depressed because there are so many out there; but I eventually realized that there's a place to go once the spider can grow. They did that in TARANTULA, they used a real spider but their mechanical one was so obvious. Then you have the GIANT SPIDER INVASION but that was too unbelievable and went too campy, which was actually its charm. As long as it is growing, it's more terrifying—plus where the spider actually comes from is creepy. Everyone can relate to spiders and fear them...yes, even that dosy spider on GILLIGAN'S ISLAND, which really bothered me because it was too fake.

"I finally realized that we haven't had a giant spider film for a long time. *BATS* came out, and the 'giant crocodile' genre is coming back, so it's like the cycle has come around again. I could get to do things in this I didn't do in *MOSQUITO*, like the hero escaping in the dumbwaiter where originally I wanted them to escape using an elevator shaft."

MOSQUITO (1995), a delicious concoction of big bugs, blood, bikinis and bumpkins, earned back-handed praise from Roger Ebert ("You'll be itching to see more! Definitely up to scratch!") and Rex Reed ("The kind of movie that can get under your skin..."). Two years later, *MIMIC* (1997)—shot on a budget of \$25 million—chronicled the slugs of a mutant, oversize breed of genetically-engineered insects. Directed by Guillermo del Toro, the script paralleled *MOSQUITO*'s situations. The pivotal characters in both films are female entomologists, both of whom are supported by black Nam veterans... Both films offer a central scene where the survivors are trapped in a vehicle that's assaulted by predatory, oversize insects... Each film concludes with a matte shot of an egg chamber, which is destroyed when the hero splits open a gas line and precipitates a "big bang" by scraping metal to ignite sparks... and the clincher: some of the heroes escape the insects and climactic explosion by climbing up a dumbwaiter.

"If it's a mimic, I take it more like homage," insisted Jones. "But I guess it was at the point in *MIMIC* when they all got down in the deserted subway and I thought, 'Wait, [Charles] Dutton is a black cop, [Mira] Sorvino is a female entomologist'—and once the action started, it felt like familiar territory. It's funny though, when I saw the TV ad with the cool shot of the bug flying and grabbing the running Sorvino, I thought, 'Giant flying bugs, it looks like my giant mosquito. I should

BOB KURZMAN, KNB EFFECTS

"We used the two-foot motorized spider to kill Leslie Harter. It required a lot of takes for the spider to walk up her body; it was really tough to manipulate it crawling across her 'humps.'"



Jones references Parrilla for a "tealight-sized cocoon" scene: "I had no idea I'd be doing action or sci-fi thrillers," says Parrilla. "I'd done theater & comedy."

check it out." It started out different but... when I saw the dumbwaiter, I started to feel a bit cheated like, 'Hey, I've done that before.' I felt cheated in the sense that I expected more out of a bigger film. I was disappointed that it wasn't new. If they did look at *MOSQUITO* and pull a few things out, at least they could've changed them around so it wasn't exact. My egg chamber was inspired by *THEM!*, and I'm sure *ALIENS* took bits of *THEM!* like the egg chamber and the little girl. We all got influenced but should do it differently."

If tracked down *MIMIC*'s director, the aforementioned Guillermo del Toro, at his home in Guadalajara, Mexico. He graciously acknowledged similarities between his film and *MOSQUITO* but, when queried about the dumbwaiter gag, del Toro jovially growled, "Oh, *mosquito*! I have never seen *MOSQUITO* but now I must see it. Originally, the dumbwaiter was a way to go down, not a way to escape. The way to escape was originally an ele-

vator that didn't work, so they'd climb up the shaft. The scraping pipe and gas line breaking came much later into the film. I regret I didn't have a copy of *MOSQUITO*."

In regard to the casting of Leslie Harter, the *SPIDERS* director recounted that "when she came in to read, I merely did the improv thing with her. I said, 'A spider is jumping on you, you must scream!' Leslie screamed her lungs out and I said, 'That's it, I'm terrified.' It was the scream we needed."

For Lana Parrilla's character, all I knew was that I didn't want a *BAYWATCH* blonde babe. Although *SPIDERS* has that '50s charm, I needed someone who could act. It's great if she happens to look good, too. Overall, 120 actresses auditioned for the role. When Lana came in, she was different. She's not exactly everyone's idea of who she should be, but she was the best actress and I had to fight to get her. But they finally realized she was also the one. She's Ripley from *ALIENS*, although not

as intense. So I said she has the *Sigourney Weaver* thing and then the *Jennifer Lopez*-esque thing. I didn't have her scream because, for Marcie, it wasn't about the scream but it was if she could act. I really think that teenagers can associate with her."

It turned out that Parrilla has already experienced a certain fraternization with spiders. "I own a tarantula," she grinned, "so I've never been afraid of spiders. I went into a pet shop and thought it was the coolest thing: I was going through my Gothic stage or something, so I bought it. It's still at home."

"As far as working with the artificial spiders in Gary Jones' movie, it's been great. It was very physical and I have bruises. When I was in the harness, some scaffolding around, I was pounding against the wire cables that were woven into a spider's web within the elevator shaft. I also bumped my head about a dozen times—now, that really smarted—on pipes as we ran through the powerhouse. I also fight the spider with guns and bazookas. Gary Jones nicknamed me his Puerto Rican Ninja Bollerina."

"Working with Gary is such a pleasure, he's always smiling no matter how much bullshit he had to take and how many things he wanted but couldn't get. A friend once told me, 'If you're going to learn anything about this business, be good to your crew.' He's right, they work harder than we do and make me feel like a star, so I give a little extra..."

The crew had been her surrogate family. Parrilla reflectively described Los Angeles as "a very lonely city and I don't have much family out here. I like big families as, sometimes, I'll go to the Topeka Indian reservation in the Grand Canyon and help to weed their fields, plant corn or take care of the elderly. It's not much, but it's about the Mother Earth or something

like that."

As far as developing a similar bond in Tinseltown, Parrilla admits, "I found myself putting up such a wall that I pushed people away. I wanted to trust people, yet I was afraid to...but it worried me that I was losing friends. So I learned to drop my guard a bit, but you still have to listen to that voice in your head telling you to 'Walk away.' I think that voice is God and that is how he talks to me."

Finally, would Parrilla acquiesce to nudity if it was tagged to, in her estimation, a plum role? "I fortunately, haven't had to show anything yet in film and I'm not sure if I'll feel comfortable doing that on film—I do not feel there's any need for it, what with body doubles and stuff. I'm comfortable with my body. I just think that I'd hear my father's voice in my head saying [affecting a Puerto Rican accent], 'Don't you ever take of your shirt for anee-budy and never sleep with aneebuddy to get anee-wear.' It's funny because, now that he's gone, I hear him more. I don't think he'd haunt me forever on this...would he?" □

Parrilla ramps it up for Denise Duff: "I adore her," says the photo. "Lena owns a pet tarantula. How cool is that?" & Encountering less friendly spiders, Parrilla unleashes tarantula



WINONA RYDER LOST SOULS

WHILE SHOOTING AN "EXORCISM" THRILLER, THE 29-YEAR-OLD ACTRESS EXPLORED HER PERSONAL TIES TO GOD AND PRAYER.

By DOUGLAS EBY

Theologically, they're worlds apart but Winona Ryder and her screen character, Maya Larkin—a quilter of *LOST SOULS*—are drawing closer. "Maya's had first hand experience with exorcisms and is a great believer," explains the actress. "She's a very realistic person who is fully cognizant that conversation about possession may strike some as ridiculous. But she doesn't go around talking about it, and lives her life very quietly. Her great dilemma is convincing crime journalist Peter Kendall, who is completely devoid of faith, that this very supernatural thing is about to happen."

The core of *LOST SOULS* is Kendall's crippled spirituality, which is a vulnerability to possession by Satan. Ryder admits that her initial cynicism "is a big part of why I was attracted to the movie. My mom's a Buddhist and my father is an atheist, and I was raised to respect religion. But I've been told my whole life, 'There is no Devil, there is no Hell. You can do whatever you want, as long as you're not hurting anybody.' My roots are in Buddhism, and I went to Buddhist schools. I'd say that was my strongest influence, which is very, very different—in the realm of God and the Devil—from Catholicism or Christianity."

When introduced to Father James LeBar, the film's "exorcism consul-

tant," Ryder fired-off "a million questions. I know nothing about that world. I really don't believe there's a Devil. I even fluctuate where I stand with religion and God, and I'm kind of at that age where I'm trying to figure out where I am with the issues of faith. A lot of my questions had to do with *THE EXORCIST*, which he hadn't seen. I did read a lot of books when I got attached to the movie but, to me, they were almost silly. But *THE EXORCIST* is somewhere between science and superstition, and a very realistic movie—not real but very well done."

"But Father LeBar's answers were very scientific. I thought he was going to be full of those crazy stories, but he very much believed in possession and didn't seem to be exaggerating. He was a very interesting man. I definitely have a new respect for priests and people of the church who really believe in possession. Even if I don't believe in it, they are out there taking it very seriously. If there's a girl who is schizophrenic or mentally disturbed, and it's coming out like possession, they really examine it and don't just presume it's the Devil. They really do a heavy investigation. And the person being treated or exorcised by a priest may be helped by the placebo effect: the exorcism succeeds just because they believe in the priest, whether the possession is all in their heads or it's something real."

"That's where the whole mystery comes in, and it's very interesting. But I feel like I'm not in any place to say anything about it because I'm just an actress, and I'm just doing this movie

LOST SOULS Ryder is exorcised by John Hart. "This happens to have supernatural elements, like some of my favorite movies. *REFLECTION*, *THE EXORCIST* & *ROSEMARY'S BABY*," says director James Kamen





WINONA RYDER

"The movie was a great opportunity to explore my stance with God, with faith and with religion."

from her professional resume. There's Annalee Cull in *ALIEN RESURRECTION*, Susanna Kayson in *GIRL, INTERRUPTED*, Lydia Deitz in *BEEBLEJUICE* and *HEATHERS*! Veronica Sawyer. "But you know, five years ago I don't think I would have considered doing *LOST SOULS*. But, as you hit your 30s, you find yourself going through first experiences of losing people to death and other kinds of profound things, and you end up finding yourself praying. And if you haven't been raised in any religion, you are like, 'Who am I praying to? What do I believe in? Who am I asking for help or for strength?' I've kind of hit that time in my life during the last five years."

"Many more profound things have happened in my life, and I've been looking for answers and I've been much more curious. I just come from



Ryder is "plays a woman of great religious conviction," says *SOULS* co-writer Selma Skoll. "She struggles every day to maintain her faith in a world that diminishes her beliefs." R. Ryder is "lost soul" Ben Chaplin

But it's pretty terrifying, whether it's real or in your head.

"I think I was attracted to this movie because the idea of a devil never entered my consciousness. It was something so far from what I ever thought I'd find myself trying to believe. I saw it as one of the greatest challenges, playing a character who believes in something so strongly. It was a great opportunity to explore my own stance with God and with faith and with religion, and just kind of experiment with it. And I'm always at-

tracted to things that I feel like are very different from me as a person."

Ryder, in fact, has been routinely cast as outsiders. As an example, she cites *"THE CRUCIBLE,"* where I played a girl ("Abby Williams") who was ridiculed. I've been very drawn to people who have not been believed and who, whether they're right or wrong, intensely believe in what they're doing. In retrospect, *THE CRUCIBLE* is probably a bad example because my character was just insane." She opts, instead, to identify "authentic" misfits

such as unconventional upbringing and family, where everyone's got a different idea. It's time for me to figure out what my idea is. And if it changes every year, that's fine too. You hear about that a lot with actors. One year Madonna's Jewish, and next year, she is Catholic. I don't think it's hypocritical, it's great to explore everything."

Ryder reminds me that *LOST SOULS* isn't riding on the coattails of *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* and the *SCREAM* franchise. Belton line. It's not a horror film. "That's another



DRAKULA (30). Ryder played dual roles as Mila Murray (l.) & Elizabeth. *At* 'Nipped by Gary Oldman ("I saw the monster the [kissing] scene went to kill. I saw Dracula!"). Ryder sent the script, originally prepped as a TV film, to Francis Ford Coppola (R). Expanding the project into a theatrical saga, producer/director Coppola hired Michael Apted—original choice as director when the script was pitched as a TV flick—as executive producer. The pic domestically earned over \$62 million.



reason. I was really drawn to it," Ryder adds. "It wasn't full of gore. But the scary scenes in it reminded me of Polanski or the director of *DON'T LOOK NOW* [Nikolas Hoeg]. It's more like these weird images without music and quick flashes—I don't want to give anything away—but it's very eerie, more like someone's slowly losing their mind. And that, to me, is much more scary than someone chasing you with an axe, you know? It's not like the fear in it is not tangible. You wonder, 'Is that really happening or is she just going crazy? Is she insane?' I ask myself that every day at work. 'Am I insane in this?' And I just think that kind of fear is much more frightening."

There's something about broaching the "scary stuff" that strikes a chord in Ryder. She shifts back to her heroine's psyche. "When Maya is strong with Peter, it does get to him. But there are some very frustrating scenes where I'm pleading with him and he's like,

"It's not full of gore, it's akin to Nicolas Roeg and Polanski... and scarier than axe murder mayhem."

"You need professional help, you really do. Don't come near me anymore." And you totally understand why he's saying that, and you'd probably say it, too. Ben Chaplin made great choices in how he's playing Peter. When Peter finally comes around, it's because these tremendously weird, odd things are happening to him that cannot be explained. It's not so much a pretty girl's trying to get his attention. In a way, it's great that there's not a big love story. Our relationship is much more unique, and I'm much more touched by that than I thought I would be. It's not like they fall in love but they begin to really care about each other, and kind of love each other at the end of it. But this is not in the typical 'boy meets girl' story...what a relief!"

The choice of director also influenced Ryder's participation: "I wanted to work with Janusz Kaminiski. I wanted to be part of his directorial debut and, if it was this script, fine. Janusz is absolutely brilliant. What's great is that the crew were all guys who started with him when he was cinematographer on SCHINDLER'S LIST and maybe even before that. He doesn't bottle things in. When something happens, he kind of yells it out and you never take it personally. It's not directed at anyone. He's very open and very respectful of everyone's job, because he's had all those jobs in his life. As an actor, I'm amazed. He was always very sensitive and wonderful as a D.P. when I worked on AMERICAN QUILL. Maybe it's being married to an actress [Holly Hunter].

"Visually, Janusz is just a genius, you know that from all the movies he's done with Spielberg. I mean, he created this whole new type of cinematography that we haven't had. He's like a throwback to the sixties when they were discovering different ways to shoot things to make them scary, but yet he's completely modern and original. And you



Cost opposite Michael Keaton's BEEETLJACE (1988), Ryder pioneered her screen legacy as an outsider ("My life is a dark room...one big dark room," declares her character, "I, myself, am...strange & unusual.").

get the feeling he won't stop until he is satisfied, which is a great feeling because, a lot of times when you work, people just want to get the shot. Hence, when everything falls into frame, they feel like they've got it. And he's just a great guy, he's hilarious to be around. I always thought he should be a director. It was a great opportunity to work with him, and he's also a friend."

Next thing you know, we return to the religious tract. "I did not grow up with the fear of God, I'll put it that way," said Ryder. "And this movie deals with that. It seems like everyone ends up rebelling against it when they're raised so strictly with it. But I appreciate all different religions and I think you should take what you can from each one of them and make up your own. Do I have faith? That's a very difficult question, because faith is so associated with religion. But I think of it as believing in something, and I certainly have that."

LOST SOULS Ryder gets the point from a Scrippsically-penned mental patient. "We're kind of seeing women just defined as the girlie and the wife," gloats Mike R. Sedovitz, who co-produced the movie with actress Meg Ryan.



Ryder concedes that the dogmatic milieu of LOST SOULS impacted her, even after the production wrapped: "It's never really easy to lose it being that I'm someone who doesn't have a family that I go home to...I just kinda wander back to my hotel room, and the mood of the movie definitely lingers within you. But it's in a good way, in a way that just keeps you focused."

"The film is about God and faith, things that I think when you're in your 30s, you're sort of still figuring out where you stand. In the film, I play a woman of devout faith. She really believes in God and the Devil, and it's very kind of far from where I'm at in my life. I certainly believe in energies and stuff like that, but I don't believe in the Devil. And, again, because it was so foreign to me, it was intriguing."

"I don't really get what this stuff is about but, while shooting it, I've learned the most important thing: respect all people's beliefs. It's kind of like I've learned how you respect every actor's process, even if you don't agree with it and you think they're insane if they're banging their head against the wall and yelling out obscenities. If that's what they need to do, that's what they need to do. I feel the same way about religion. Even if you don't get it, you have to respect it. So working on this film started out just wanting to work with Janusz, and it ended up also a great experience—and I learned a lot about respect and faith."

Jessica Alba Dark Angel

STAR OF JAMES CAMERON'S TV SERIES RECOUNTS THE HORROR-COMIC FILM THAT PROVOKED CONTROVERSY AFTER COLUMBINE.

BY DENNIS FISCHER

James Cameron, director of *TERMINATOR II* and *TITANIC*, is shifting to another medium: as co-executive producer of *DARK ANGEL*, a Fox sci-fi series, Cameron awarded the title role to Jessica Alba, who not only survived last year's critically-drubbed *IDLE HANDS* but was later cast in *THE SLEEPING DICTIONARY* and *PARANOID*, the latter a dark thriller.

Directed by David Nutter (*DISTURBING BEHAVIOR*), the pilot episode offers Alba as Max, aka Sara Rutherford, a "genetically enhanced" 16-year-old "superhuman prototype." Escaping from a military lab project, she's a survivor of the future's post-apocalyptic environment. Circumventing government agents, Max seeks refuge within San Francisco's corrupted, underground milieu. Developing an alliance with Logan Clarke (Michael Weatherly), a "crusading, idealistic cyber-journalist," she becomes "his loyal samurai" in their mutual contempt for "ruthless power-brokers of the new millennium."

But the aforementioned *IDLE HANDS* piques my



Alba is Devon Sawa in *IDLE HANDS*, a violent film rumored in the wake of the Columbine tragedy. "It's scary, darn scary...it's more grotesque than scary."

curiosity. Vilified by reviewers, the black comedy—about a teenage pothead (Devon Sawa) saddled with a disembodied, homicidal hand and the disfigured ghosts of his stoned buds (Seth Green and Elden Henson)—was released right on the heels of last year's Columbine High School massacre ("Some commentators have wondered if movies like this aren't partly responsible," wrote Roger Ebert.) Bad timing, the film, laced with a surplus of comic carnage, tanked at the

boxoffice.

Alba played "Molly," the literal girl-next-door who incites the hero's teen lust. "Devon was just so funny," she grins. "He danced in between scenes and he sang. He's just a goof, but I was really inspired by how he threw himself into the role."

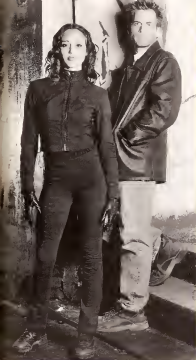
The actress was initially affiliated with the film via a director who was subsequently replaced by Rodman Flender: "I got the first script and I just fell in love with it. I thought it was so hysterical. Out of all the

teen genre 'scary movies' that were being being cast and shot, it was just the one that stuck out for me because it was so ridiculous and over-the-top. I loved it because it made fun of itself."

"I saw Molly as someone who is very forward. She's very unafraid. She's sexually forward, and she likes to challenge people. My character plays a game in a scene with Devon. She challenges him to come up to her house; she challenges him to see how far he will go with her. She likes to play with his mind. He ends up going as far as she wants to go [seriously giggles]."

"It gives her a thrill, she likes high staked. Molly rides a motorcycle, wears leather pants, plays the bass guitar and makes her own costume. She's a really cool girl. I think that's why I liked her, because—well, I'm so not cool. But, hey, I got to play a cool girl."

When she was cast as "Maysa Graham" on the defunct *FLIPPER* television series (1995-96), the only thing that Alba rode was a dolphin. One of her requisites for *IDLE HANDS* was acquiring a motorcycle permit: "That was a little freaky! I had ridden dirt



Aborted by Michael Weatherly's "swirling cyber-guardian," Alba goes post-apocalyptic as DARK ANGEL. The sci-fi series is produced by Jesse Gelsinger.

hikees and I loved being on the back of a huge hog. I think it's great. I love Harleys. But on the first day, I was learning and riding around the lot where we were filming, and I ran into a curb and I pressed the gas and the brake at the same time. I went over the top and I went off a hill...

"The hike tipped over and leaped everywhere—this was all so embarrassing—and it landed, of all places, right in front of the producers' office. They were all, 'Oh

my God!' because I'd just signed the contracts to do the movie, and that was my first day and I literally went over the top—of the bike, that is." Alba, however, wasn't discouraged from performing some of her own motorcycle stunts. She also gamely dangled from the roof of the high school's auto shop, her fear of heights notwithstanding.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* described *IDLE HANDS* as "a gross-out horror comedy. It soon becomes almost

JESSICA ALBA

"I got the first script & just fell in love with it. I thought it was hysterical. Out of all the teen genre 'scary movies,' I loved it because it was so over-the-top, and made fun of itself."

a klutzy parody *Grand Guignol* crescendo of gushing blood." Alba prefers to define the movie as "a scary, dark comedy. It's way more of a dark comedy than I think it is a horror movie. I think it is more grotesque than scary, but the stuff that is scary well, it's ridiculous. Like someone's hand being chopped off. It's just gnarly, visually, but it's really, really funny. It's not meant to be taken seriously. It's almost like we're all cartoons—it's way over the top. It's fun."

Critics traced the movie's homage to forerunners of the "living appendage" gag, including *EVIL DEAD 2*, *THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS* and *THE ADAMS FAMILY*. "But what we were shooting for—and God save me if it's an insult to the movie—we were trying to shoot for *BEEBLE JUICE*," says Alba. "Smart, witty, but really over the top and really dark. It's all set at night, so it's really dark visually, and it takes people into this really freaky fun land."

"It was about this boy whose hand gets possessed by the Devil, and it freaks out on him. He's always wasted and watching TV, hence, according to an old adage—'idle hands are the Devil's workshop'—he's vulnerable. He can be sleeping, and the hand can be doing things that he's oblivious to—like murdering his parents and friends. He doesn't know what's going on until he wakes up and sees the blood all over his hands and the body count."

"It's really funny and Devon was animated, but very real. I just thought that was the best choice. The funniest scene for me was probably

the bedroom scene. I really loved working off of him because he played this innocent little boy who's nervous, and he doesn't know what to do. We were just playing, totally having fun."

"I also loved hanging out with Seth and Eiden. They are really great guys. Seth was a little entertainer, and Eiden was like *Sideshow Bob*. They were just great together and played off each other. I loved the producers [Jennifer and Suzanne Todd, who also produced both *AUSTIN POWERS* movies]. They were really awesome, young, hip women and they were on set every day. It was like a family."

She regrets missing an opportunity to work with Vivien A. Fox (*INDEPENDENCE DAY*), who was cast as the film's druid/exorcist (Fox delivers the film's best line, e.g., "There is evil out

Alba supported *FLIPPER* on a 1995-'96 TV series. In *DARK ANGEL*, she plays the temptress of the role



there, and I'm going to kick its ass!" and "My work here is done. Time for ritualistic sex!". "Vivica and I were on the set together only two or three days," remembers Alha. "She was hysterical as well. One of my favorite moments was when we all had dinner together with the executives, and we ate and talked and really got to know each other. That was really fun, because Vivica was going off talking about her show [CITY OF ANGELS] and Seth would put in his little bit. When you're working, some people stay in their character so much, you don't really get to know them. We just got to know each other and be real. It was cool."

In regard to director Rodman Flender—whose television track record includes episodes of *MILLENNIUM*, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, and *DAWSON'S CREEK*—Alha professes the filmmaker "is strong and independent. He just gave me the basics and he allowed me to go from there, which is awesome. He allowed me to do every scene in opposite ways: I would do it really scared and then I would do it nonchalant."

"Also, there were times when he would like it one way, but I may have wanted to try something else. It was really cool with Rodman because if he liked it a certain way, he gave me the freedom to do it my way too, which is awesome because most directors want you to do it their way and that's it. He's great with variety like that, so anything he told me to do, I did. He's a perfectionist, and he really just wanted to get it right and make it really good visually. He's awesome, very open-minded and very sweet."

If Alha is cheered about anything, it's the costume ensemble—angel tops and huge hair—required as her character's Halloween masquerade: "Devon always teased me about it because I wore a really big, '80s-beehive hairdo. A few times, go-

JESSICA ALBA

"The first day of production, while learning to ride my motorbike, the vehicle ran into a curb—this was so embarrassing—and leaped in the producers' office after I signed my contract!"



OLIVIA HARRIS introduced Alha, to a Harley. "It was a bit tricky. I had ridden dirt bikes and I spent being on the back of a huge hog. I learned while we filmed."

ing through the tunnels, I would squash my angel hole and it would come out with blood stuck to it and all crooked because I wear it pretty much through the whole thing."

"I had little shorts underneath my costume and they kept riding up every time I moved. Because I had fake blood dripping off my hands, I would have to ask random people to pull down my shorts for me. So with every girl who would walk by, I'd say, 'Can you please pull my shorts down?'"

The lead singer of Offspring, the band that furnished music for the climactic Halloween pageant, was offered extra screen time. In addition to being offed by the psychotic hand, he was fed a single line of dialogue. "And right there on the set," recalls Alha, "he begged me, 'You got to help me act!'"

The set was a blood bath, with prosthetic body parts littering the sound stages. "We'd all slip on blood," recounts Alha. "We would run in the scene and then slide straight back out of camera range. We'd be on our asses, or fall forward, because we'd just slip on this artificial blood. I don't think anyone else got scarred, but I have two huge scars on my shin now because of it. But it was fine, I'm such a klutz anyway."

A few grisly murders into the movie, Molly is introduced as the hero's realization of "a hot babe," but she turns out to be a reserved (i.e. affably vapid) Gen-Xer. "But at the end, when all hell is breaking loose, my character is ready to die. She's hit on the head by a pot, reacts with 'Ow' and faints. It's just ridiculous."

When I query about her

past professional experience, Alha noted she instinctively turned to acting since her early youth: "I always entertained my family one way or another. I got an agent when I was 12, and I started auditioning. Luckily enough, I started working right away. But before I started acting, I lived in San Luis Obispo, Illinois, Mississippi and in Texas. My father was in the Air Force."

She made her film debut in 1994's *CAMP NOWHERE*, a comedy starring Christopher Lloyd and Kate Mulgrew ("...old fashioned and borderline corny," wrote *Newsweek*). Alha was subsequently cast in the following year's *LEAVING LAS VEGAS* but her role was cut from the film; nevertheless, she recalls that Nicolas Cage, who earned an Oscar for his performance, "was the most endearing man ever. I've always loved him, and working with him made me just unbelievably happy. I was just grinning from ear to ear the whole time, and he was really sweet, nice, gentle and soft-spoken."

A weekly role in the short-lived *FLIPPER* series followed, but Alha feels more inclined to talk about her appearance on an episode ("Sexual Perversity in Chicago Hope") of *CHICAGO HOPE*: "It was really sort of edgy. I did something that I was completely not. This girl I played, 'Maria,' was sexually active at 12 or 13 with a 30-year-old man. She got an STD in her throat from him, and I'm so not like that. It was like her mother approved of it because the guy made sure she went to school, and I didn't agree with it. It was really challenging to bring forth that promiscuous character, she even comes on to the doctor. I got to work with really great actors, and got to see what it's like to be on a network one-hour drama. It's very difficult. And I got a totally different respect."

Alha's other TV credits—including *LOVE BOAT*, *THE NEW WAVE* and *BEVERLY HILLS*, 90210—did-



n't require the same intensity. After supporting roles in **NEVER BEEN KISSED** and **F.U.N.K.S.**, Alba earned expanded screen visibility in **IDLE HANDS**; but, this time around, she acquiesced to a sexier but comic psyche. "If a guy was in my front yard, I would not invite him into my house the way Molly does in the movie," she says. "It was fun playing a girl who takes risks, because I would never do that in real life. So I got to play out my fantasy of taking risks. Molly's whole attitude and body movement were really slithery and windy. The way I talked was like a big power trip. It was cool."

Working in tandem with Greg Cannom special effects technology proved "equally cool. I've never seen such amazing stuff. Every day, they would put three hours of makeup on Seth, Elden and the hand. It was unbelievable! I think I don't know if I'll ever work with those sorts of special

effects again. It was so real.

"When we were working, people would walk by and they couldn't stop staring at Seth and Elden in their gruesome makeup. They were totally freaked out by it, and would sometimes completely cross to the other side of the street. I thought it was great. Even the extras would get freaked out on the special effects. It looked very real."

So would the youthful thespian concede to working on another horror film? "It's challenging with the action stuff," Alba replies. "It's great to be scared, you got a rush. The stuff that was frightening is...you can't even think up things that are that frightening. It's nasty, totally grotesque!" Perhaps in deference to critics, she adds, "I hope audiences just laugh their butts off watching these films and scream. Don't take it seriously and don't think of any of us as being icons in any way. Laugh and scream!" □

IDLE HANDS: "Devon Sawa teased me about my Halloween togs." **EL:** W/ Vivica Fox ("We were on set together only 2-3 days; she was hysterical") and Sawa.



VANESSA ANGEL STARGATE SG1

ONCE SULTRY IN A SCI-FI SITCOM, A NEW ROLE AS AN ALIEN HYBRID PITCHES HER AS MORE THAN A SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

BY DENNIS FISCHER

An actor pulls out all of the stops—playing a paycokehead or drug addict with unrestrained, carte blanche mugging—and he or she is showered with laudatory reviews. Will someone explain Sharon Stone's Oscar nomination for CASINO? Her performance seems calibrated to match Leonard Stone's impassioned portrayal of "Fong" in THE BIG MOUTH, a varietal of schizophrenic slapstick directed by Jerry Lewis (I suspect this movie is Jim Carrey's personal catechism). But is an understated performance—so subtly plied that it looks and sounds effortless—equally rewarding?

This dichotomy isn't lost on Vanessa Angel, a former model who played "Megan" during a single season of BAYWATCH. As the VR vamp of WEIRD SCIENCE, a sitcom (1994-97) spun-off from an 1985 sleeper, she embodied the pinup fantasy of two horny nerds. Regardless of ensembles trimmed to accentuate her cleavage and gams, Angel was also the anti-bimbo, a sort of distaff Foxxy who arbitrated what's cool ("I'm only a supercomputer magic genie. I have my limits.")



Angel as WEIRD SCIENCE's PG genie. "Sure, they wanted a beautiful girl but they wanted one with a likability factor which is really important in comedy."

For the past five years, Angel appeared in Bobby and Peter Farrar's KINGPIN and floundered in a couple of action films. She's renewed her ties with sci-fi in a recurring role on Showtime's STARGATE SG-1 series. "We have a three-episode arc of a person joining us who is a Tok'ra [a symbiotic alien species], and she may come back in the future," explains executive producer Herb Wright. "Vanessa Angel was our guest star, a very beautiful woman who did a very nice job in that role."

Lunching in the series' Vancouver studio, Angel describes her role as "a breed of woman who is like two different people within one person. It was quite a challenging role because Freya, my host character, is basically human. The other character is a symbiote named Anise, and she's a scientist whose expertise is ancient cultures. I go in and out of both characters with a blink of an eye. Freya is attracted to Richard Dean Anderson's character, and my symbiote is attracted to Michael Shanks' character."

Anderson, the series' star and co-executive producer, is cast as Air Force Colonel Jack O'Neill, who leads his SG-1 team on an odyssey



"I came from a modeling background and, though fun to play that for a while, the typecasting gets frustrating when you try branching-off into more adult roles."

through the Stargate, a matter transmission system that links up the galaxy. Mission: search for technology that can be applied to Earth's defense against the Goa'ulds, a hostile alien race. O'Neill's team consists of Daniel Jackson (Michael Shanks), Major Samantha Carter (Amanda Tapping), Teal'c (Christopher Judge) and Dr. Janet Fraiser (Deryl Roberts).

"Vanessa Angel is a delight," says Wright. "Her character is a Tok'ra, which is a Goa'uld who has decided not to take humans as unwilling hosts: they will only take a willing host for moral reasons. Working as a sort

L. Angel in STARGATE SG-1's "Crossroads" episode. "She plays an operative whom we meet in the 'Upgrade' episode [6]," says an exec producer.





STARDATE 801 **F&A:** Angel, sci-fi veteran Mazetta Vinner (*WILD WILD WEST*, *OPRANION*), GUNNE 2000 & Christopher Judge in the "Crossroads" episode. Recalling the embryonic stage of her career, Angel notes, "Many models were making the transition from network to the screen. I wanted to give myself an edge."



of fifth column against the Goa'ulds, they are basically rebels who lead a campaign to stop the Goa'ulds from terrorizing the galaxy.

"Vanessa plays an operative whom we meet in the third episode called 'Upgrades,' and then the two following stories bring her back. She did a terrific job, probably a better job than she thought she did. I have

to say that actors who are doing science fiction for the first time are always flummoxed and overwhelmed by the amount of made-up technical jargon that we foist on them. And we're talking about speeches as long as your arm! They weren't Trekkies or sci-fi heads at all, but they had to make it work to make it believable. I think Vanessa did

a great job."

Angel insists, "Richard Dean Anderson plays the comedic character. My character—because Anise is a scientist—is all very matter-of-fact, and it was quite hard for me because I had to learn so much exposition. The way the Tok'rs speak is almost like learning...I wouldn't say Shakespeare, but it was a different way of putting your sentences together and it's quite hard to memorize. I would sometimes just have a hard time getting some of the exposition out, and I'd beat myself up about it and Richard would be like, 'Oh, you're being so hard on yourself. This is just fun.' He's really, truly one of the nicest people I've worked with."

"In the first episode, Anise discovers that arm-bands from an ancient planet gave whoever wore them this incredible speed and strength, and she wanted to experiment on the Stargate

SG-1 team. She sort of ends up putting everybody in jeopardy, so she's not particularly liked among the SG-1 team. In the second episode, I'm mostly playing Anise and then, in the third episode, I am playing more of the Freya character. I think they will bring her back and we'll see what happens with it."

She is similarly impressed with her recent role in *ONE LAST HEIST*, a movie she describes as "a takeoff of *TOWERING INFERNO*, it's an updated version. I play Dean Cain's wife and we have a daughter, and we're sort of at odds with each other. It was the first time I got to play a mother, so it was quite fun."

Last year, Angel wrapped a string of independently-produced movies: *CAMOUFLAGE*, co-written by Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Epperson, afforded the actress "a wonderful script. Thornton actually wrote it ten

"Everybody is into the Farrelly brothers now but, at the time it came out, KINGPIN didn't get noticed. It took a big leap of faith to do that one. Now it's a cult film."

years ago, before he had done SLING BLADE, and he wrote a part for himself in it. But since then, he has become quite popular and he is directing, so, other than writing the script, he isn't in it and didn't direct it. The part that he wrote for himself is played by William Forsythe, and Leslie Nielsen is also in it. James Keach directed it. He's wonderful, and that was also shot up in Vancouver [the film was originally set in the Southwest]. I play this smalltown girl who turns out to be behind all this stuff. It was a really good, offbeat, odd black comedy."

Subsequently cast in PARTNERS, Angel played a great character, the girlfriend of Casper Van Dien. She's this sort of fun, Southern, poor white trash. I never played that before. She's this kind of spontaneous, fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants type of girl. It was great to work with David Paymer, he's terrific actor. It was directed by Joey Travolta, John Travolta's brother."

Angel reunited with Paymer for ENEMIES OF LAUGHTER, which costarred Rosalind Wiseman, Martha Hemeny and Peter Falk. "That one is about a writer who has writer's block, and I'd say it's a comedy. David Paymer plays a writer, and it actually has an almost Woody Allen kind of feeling to it. I play a past person in his life with whom he was involved."

Directed by Christopher Coppola, brother of actor Nicolas Cage, Angel played "Gloria Lake" in the elec-



Supporting Dan Aykroyd, Ms. Angel made her film debut in SPIES LIKE US (1985). "That film got me lots of attention. It was a big budget studio picture. Now I can see that was a mistake because I just wasn't ready. I hadn't studied enough."

tic G-MEN FROM HELL. "Christopher is so funny, he likes that whole takeoff approach," she recounts. "It sounds like a classic B-movie from the '50s. It was a really fun shoot and he used great camera angles. He's a really great guy with an interesting eye."

"That was based on a comic book called The G-Men, and it stars Yula Diamond, William Forsythe and myself. I play a great character and I got to wear this long, platinum blonde wig, and it had a very Dick Tracy kind of feeling—all the costumes were very brightly colored and had almost a '40s film noir feel to them. It's a bit on the campy side. It's sort of a murder-mystery situation, and you're not sure who's really behind it."

"My character is married to this really wealthy guy—she seems to be this real innocent, vulnerable mixture between Veronica Lake and Marilyn Monroe. As a matter of fact, I seem so innocent that I'm suspect. A red herring."

I query about KINGPIN (1996), the Farrelly brothers' baroque. Released two years after the siblings' DUMB & DUMBER, and two years before

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY, the film was somehow lost in the shuffle. "It's funny, I think that movie came out before its time," shrugs Angel. "Everybody's into the Farrelly brothers now but, at the time it came out, it didn't get noticed. Now it's almost a cult movie and people have gone back to look at it. It was a funny movie, and it was a blast to make. I took a big leap of faith on that one, though."

"The Farrellys added a lot of the humor while they were shooting, and not all of it was in the script. Remember the scene where we had that fight and he's punching my mechanical breasts? That wasn't even in the script, it was added on. I thought, 'My God, I can't imagine this scene is going to work, all the women in the audience are gonna be squirming in their seats!' That's the sort of stuff where you have to trust them. The Farrellys were great, just a blast. Peter is probably the more outspoken one, he talks with actresses more. Bobby would sit by the monitor, but they would always talk to each other. They are very much a team and they

work great together, and they have this great sense of humor and trust each other."

"I've known Bill Murray, who played Ernie McCracken in the movie, for years. My debut film, SPIES LIKE US, starred Dan Aykroyd and Dan and Bill were quite tight at the time. But I met Bill years ago and we were friends...not close friends but acquaintances, and actually, the McCracken character wasn't cast when we started shooting. I think Jim Carrey was originally going to do it as sort of a cameo but, at the eleventh hour, he couldn't do it. So I suggested Bill Murray, and they sent him the script. I'm not taking credit for it, but he was excited to get the chance to reconnect with me too, so it was a blast to be able to hang out with Bill."

"Woody Harrelson, who played the pivotal character of 'Roy Munson,' was fun but he's also much deeper than you would think. There's more to him than meets the eye. Randy [Quaid] was really funny, too. He's kind of a quiet guy, not someone that you get to know too quickly, but he's very sweet and very professional. The whole experience was pleasant."

The actress pegs director



Angel and Richard Dean Anderson in *STARGATE*'s "Upgrades" episode. "Richard, who plays the comedic character, is a funny guy. He & Amanda Tapping have fun with each other. He's also truly one of the nicest people I ever worked with."

John Landis—whose credits include *NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE*, *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* and *COMING TO AMERICA*—as the founder of her career: "He's really funny, and I'm so thankful to him because he started me out in this business. John saw photos of me in a magazine and called me in for a part in *SPIES LIKE US*. He really changed the course of my life. From there, I started to study acting and realized that it was something I wanted to do seriously."

"John knows how to keep a set together. He makes everybody feel like they're having fun, and he has that leadership quality I think directors need. He was executive producer on the *WEIRD SCIENCE* television series, so I have a lot to be thankful to him for."

"John sent me to meet Bonnie Tinnerman, this big casting director. She put me in touch with Sandra Lee, who taught acting in New York. She was also teaching at The Actors Studio, which was very tough to get into. Back in 1989, I was lucky enough to audition and I got in because of Sandra Lee, and it was a great

learning experience. It changed my life. It made me examine all the things you have to examine to be an actor—it makes you really look at yourself and your feelings."

Raised in North London's Harrow-on-the-Hill, Angel—adhering to her homework—shed her stiff-upper-lip reserve. "Having been born in England, I was somewhat sheltered from my feelings. Acting really opened me up as a feeling human being, so it was a real life-changing course."

"I was recently in London—I hadn't been there in two and a half years—and I realized that it's a cultural thing: I think it's a British way not to particularly feel

your feelings and to show a certain face to the world. I think British people—I'm not going to be popular with my countrymen for saying this—are definitely just not as open and communicative as Americans. I've become so much more Americanized because I have lived so long in the States."

Five years after debuting in the Landis comedy, Angel was cast in *KING OF NEW YORK*, a film noir drawn from the dark psyche of director Abel Ferrara. "Abel was such an interesting director," she recalls. "Really intense. I was fairly new in the business and worked on it two days. It was a scene with Christopher Walken, and it was great to watch

him work...

"I was actually going to work with Abel Ferrara on *THE BAD LIEUTENANT* a couple of years later, but the movie got postponed for six months. I went through a rehearsal process with Harvey Keitel, and he does a very Method kind of acting, doing a lot of rehearsals and improvising and getting to a much deeper level of work than you would in most situations. It's just great to be around people like that who have such a great work ethic and such a deep way of working. Even if it were for a couple of days, it would be great to just hang around these kind of people to learn."

"When I went to The Actors Studio in New York, Christopher Walken would mediate the class. He's very funny. He's got this great sense of humor. He'd just tell us little stories about situations that had happened to him, and he'd be much more real about it. Sometimes teachers can get very philosophical about things, but Christopher would come in and deflate that. He said that his favorite word as 'lunch'—just silly things like that which make you realize that, for some of the best actors, it's not about this deep, dark inner world that they have to channel into."

Garnering visibility in prime time, Angel was often cast as decorative meenemies in the likes of *MELROSE PLACE*, *ON THE AIR*, *THE EQUALIZER*, and *TIME TRAX*. "COVER GIRL, MURDERS, shot for television, was not one of the better movies I've made—that's for sure. But it was fun. That was actually shot in Puerto Varas, Mexico. Sometimes it's nice to take a job that takes you to some nice location. Lee Majors and Bohne Phillips starred, and the film was another of those 'woodunt' things. Sometimes you just have to step into the fantasy of whatever the situation,

Angel with Teryl Rothery and Anderson in the "Upgrades" episode. "Vivian was a terrific job, probably a better job than she thought she did," says the exec producer.



“Beautiful women are usually written-off as bitchy or as ice princesses. But in WEIRD SCIENCE, my sci-fi femme was really fun to play because she’s one of the guys.”

make the most of it and not take it all too seriously.”

One of her preferred TV roles was “on a series that was titled REASONABLE DOUBTS [1991-93]. I played Detective Peggy Elliott. I really enjoyed the cop aspect of it, I think it was the most dramatic part I’ve played. That was such a great opportunity because not many people would hire me to play a police officer. It was a really well written show and Mark Harmon [“Det. Dicky Cobb”] is one of the nicest people I’ve ever worked with, and Marlee Matlin [“Assistant D.A. Tess Kaufman”] is obviously very talented, what with winning an Oscar. More important, it was a chance to play someone grounded with real issues and not based on glamour at all.

“Peggy was quite conflicted because she really wanted to be taken seriously as a police officer and, because she was a woman, she felt she really had to overcompensate for that. It was very much a boys’ club, so she was always trying to prove herself a little bit more because she wanted to fit into that. She had a little bit of a chip on her shoulder.”

Five years later, Angel honed her comedic aptitude on the NBC sitcom, VERONICA’S CLOSET. “That happened because I had worked with David Schwimmer that summer [in KISSING A POOL], and they were looking to bring this recurrent character in the first season but it ended up only being two episodes. David suggested me because



Angel as WEIRD SCIENCE's Virtual Reality vamp: "The gradients were all there for this contemporary version of REMINGTON. Life's lessons were taught via this wacky side."



Maura Tierney, Angel and Christopher Judge in STARGATE's "Crossroads" episode. "I got used to being a sex symbol throughout the modeling years. But now I had a chance to show a complete range of emotions from comedy to drama."

they were looking for someone who could look like a model, but the character was seven months pregnant so that was fun to play. I had never played pregnant before! It's fun doing live audience shows. You have to be on your toes because producers, as you are shooting, change the jokes if they feel that they are not working—and you've got to change the punch line. Improv helps."

Angel doesn't miss the TV medium. On the contrary... "WEIRD SCIENCE really taught me to be able to step into the fantasy of any situation, because you're doing it week after week. I think it's great for actors to do TV. WEIRD SCIENCE was very youth oriented. It was on the USA Network and not on one of the bigger networks, but since then there have been so many shows geared primarily toward the teen market. I think that if it had been on Warner Bros. network today, it would have been a more successful show."

"It was a learning ground for me. I learned how to really deliver in the first or second take because, on TV, you don't have that much time. It was very light-hearted, so I didn't have to dig that deep for emotions. A lot

of stuff was done with blue screen and, each week, there was some crazy storyline. Since the special effects would be added in post-production, I had to use my imagination."

"It allowed me to lighten as well because, at that time, I was going through some difficult things in my personal life. When you're working on silly, goofy stuff for 12 hours a day, it kind of forces you to laugh. We had quite a few laughs on the set all around..."

"Looking back, I wouldn't want to do a character who is based so much on how I look. I'm trying to steer away from that a little bit. It's been somewhat of a struggle for me to be seen as anything but a glamorous bombshell..."

"You have to embrace what works in the beginning. I came from a modeling background and, though fun to play for a while, the typecasting thing sets in and it gets frustrating when you're trying to branch out into more adult roles. People remember the last thing you did, and they want to keep you in a certain category. I had played so many pinup-type fantasies that some people have a hard time thinking I can be a be-

lievable lawyer or doctor. That's been somewhat frustrating."

A couple of films, both independently produced in 1994, offered Angel an opportunity to abandon stereotypes. "CITYSCRAPES: LOS ANGELES was a series of different stories about different individuals, and how they ended up all being connected," recounts the actress. "I played Trouble. It was shown in black and white, and it was interesting. It's been playing on the Sundance Channel." But she nails SLEEP WITH ME as a film with significant impact. "That was one of my best working experiences. Todd Field, Craig Sheffer and Eric Stoltz were in it. It was real collaboration, not just a director saying, 'Okay, be over here and do this.' We had a rehearsal process, and my character only had that one, pivotal scene. It was just authentically improvisational."

As an assistant director taps his watch, my dialogue with Angel shifts back to STARGATE. "Richard Dean Anderson is a funny, funny guy," she smiles. "There was a funny thing that happened, but it was really between him and Amanda Tapping who plays Major

"In STARGATE, I was cast in challenging dual roles. Freya, my host character, is basically human. My alter ego is a symbiote whose expertise is ancient cultures."

Carter on the show. They have fun with each other. I shouldn't really repeat this, but they have a lot of fun on that show. There's a lot of serious business going on but, between takes, there's a lot of laughing. Christopher Judge, who plays the alien, is a really funny guy too. But the series was challenging because this dialogue is almost like learning a different language, and to be two different characters... when it's exposition, it's hard for you to hang on to the words because, emotionally, it's not particularly connected. It's just talking a lot about things that have happened. I hope it comes across well."

Between films, the actress—who's also a youthful bride—enjoys hiking, yoga and gardening. "We bought a house a couple of years ago, and we've been doing a lot of landscaping and fixing up," she grins. "I really want to start getting into charity work. I've been talking to some people about that. It's tough when you get a little self-consuming with a career in Hollywood, and you neglect some of the goals that you've had in your life. I'd like to be able to give more time to good causes, but unfortunately, I haven't really done as much as I would like to."

Summarizing her career, she again reflects upon stereotypes, specifically the controntemps involving a former model's acting credibility. "My berserk in WEIRD SCIENCE, Lisa, was fun to play because she was very much one of the guys. A lot

of times on TV, the beautiful girl is portrayed as cold or not approachable but—even though she was very much in the image that these boys had created of a fantasy woman—Lisa was very easy to get along with. There's not many good parts for beautiful women: usually, they're written-off as ice princesses or bitchy. In a way, Lisa was almost child-like because she—as a non-human entity—is experiencing things for the first time.

"In a professional capacity, I would just love the opportunity to play different sorts of characters than I've already played. I'd love the opportunity to get back on television, but with a dramatic, reality-based show. I'd love to use my strengths and depths that I've developed over the years..."

Angel eventually returns to the sound stage. Though at the mercy of Gon'uld technology, she flawlessly delivers her dialogue. She may be adrift in "the other side of the universe," but the former model—the iconic "male fantasy"—is grounded in reality. □

Posing for *STARDATE's* "Divide and Conquer" episode (1), Angel reveals her debut in *SPICES LIKE US*, to "It was a great experience but it was a seriously decorative-sounding role."





CATHERINE BARLOW

OMEGA CHICK

INITIATING THE LAUNCH OF A
SCI-FI FRANCHISE, SHE PLAYS
THE LAST WOMAN ON EARTH!

BY FRED SZEBIN

Thunderhead Entertainment, a company founded by the husband/wife team of Benjamin and Robyn Cooper, has developed *THE OMEGA DIARY* as their collaborative maiden effort. Released on video by Spectrum Films, it's the first in a proposed venue of "low budget fantastic films" that will premiere annually. Written, produced and directed by Mr. Cooper, *THE OMEGA DIARY* documents the post-apocalyptic odyssey of the "last woman on Earth," a sub-genre pioneered by the likes of *FIVE* (1951), *THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL* (1959) and Roger Corman's *LAST WOMAN ON EARTH* (1960).

Catherine Barlow, the latest incarnation of the "last woman," appeared in

footlight productions of *Phoenix*, *The Woolgatherer* and *The Owl and the Pussycat*. Her histrionics prompted

"Catherine Barlow [!] is all woman," says photog Linda Tinfens. "She is bubbly, statuesque & sensuous." *B. Barlow as OMEGA DIARY's "last woman on Earth."*





"I have a huge appetite for sci-fi pictures, but too many low budget efforts try to mimic the super budget blockbusters on their own level and fail."

Rob Stevens, a scribe for *It's Showtime* magazine, to gush, "Catherine Barlow is a real find...looking like a young Julie Newmar with the comic timing of Lucille Ball..." Making her movie debut in *THE TROUBLE WITH MARTHA*, the actress was cast in multiple roles: "It was so different! I played Jenica, a neo-modern hermit with a twin sister named Martha—their birth was linked to a genetic experiment. Jenica was a girl in a strange situation trying to reach out for human contact. I also played a very enthusiastic neighbor...she's enthusiastic about Bundt cakes and Spam casseroles."

"Catherine [C] reminded me of Julie Newmar & Bette Page," says photo-genius Linda Tarter. "She is Amazonian & genuinely weird. It's a uniquely sexy combination for her and *It* debut [R]."





"The reality of being the only actress on set was intense at times. Sometimes I'd go into the side room and ball my head off. Reality was very blurred on the set."

I also played myself, in a way, except very emotional. I was pregnant during the shoot.

Barlow's performance drew a rave review from producer/director Larry Buchanan, aka the Sultan of Shock (*MARS NEEDS WOMEN*, *ZONTAR THE THING FROM VENUS*, et al). "I didn't know who he was at first but he came up to me, shook my hand and said, 'You need to stay with this.' That gave me fuel to go on for five years."

The actress was cast in *OMEGA DIARY* as hard-shelled Amber McReady. A full nuclear exchange, announced on a radio broadcast, is a catalyst for her alliance with five strangers: two-faced Cyrus (Scott

Photographer Linda Telford: "To add a sexy spin to Catherine's role as *OMEGA DIARY*'s 'tuff woman' [Z], I shot her in an end-of-the-world environment at a Playa Del Rey pier [L]."



Bentley), moody Rusty (Warren G. Hall), war veteran Stan (Monty Wall), the assertive Paul (Mark Brunasse) and shadowy stranger Kincaid (Mitch Adams). Occupying a bunker, constructed by Kincaid's grandfather in preparation for an atomic holocaust, the half dozen inhabitants try to acclimate themselves to a claustrophobic existence. But surviving Armageddon is no cake walk: friendships and mutual trusts quickly erode, as Kincaid plants fear and mistrust in his neighbors.

Barlow wasn't required to compete in a cattle call for the role, matter of fact, it literally fell on her lap! "That was good," she muses. "Basically, I was laying on the couch. I wasn't acting at the time and I was really sad, really freaked out and depressed. Then my husband threw this script on my lap. On the cover page, it said, 'Catherine, please read this. Are you interested in the part of Amber?' I swear I read it in 20 minutes, cover to cover. I loved it!" Little wonder the formalities had been dropped: Barlow previously hosted UNSIGNED, a regional TV series produced by Cooper.

In the film's exposition, Barlow plays her character as a tough introvert; her uncompromising, suspicious demeanor is the result of repeated rapings that were inflicted upon her by an uncle. She's later molested by power-hungry Stan when his control, within the bunker, begins to dwindle.

"That rape scene itself didn't bother me so much," insists Barlow, "—that is scary to say, I guess. Just the reality of being the only actress on the set was intense at times. Sometimes I went into the side room and balled my head off. Everyone was so much into their parts. Reality was very blurred on that set. Very blurred, let me tell you."

She declined to strip during a lovemaking scene that was written for herself and leading man Hall. Its erotic



THE OMEGA DIARY: Barlow with Monty Wall and Warren G. Hall. "I swear, I read the script, cover to cover, in 20 minutes," says the actress. "My character plays games."

content turned out to be restrained, but the nude physique—visible in the final edit—does not belong to Barlow, she opted for a body double. "I've come this far without having done nudity," she explains, "—and not for lack of offers. I take my acting career seriously, and I'd like others to as well. I was hounding around in a bathing suit in the first part of the movie, but my character would not care about that when she realizes, 'I'm gonna die'."

"To a certain degree, I can relate to Amber. But she wears these masks. She plays games, puts on these little parts. That's why it's fun to play her, but I can't put over these games. She's hurt inside. I'm sure everyone is."

The Omega Diary alludes to a chronicle that Rusty maintains while sealed in the bunker. The film opens with a quote from Revelations, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." It's an overture to a character-driven drama. Preferring his sci-fi to be straight up, Benjamin Cooper resisted the more commercial prospect of tailoring the film into a "lust in atomic dust" fantasy. His introspective characters reflect on corruptive influences and the fragility of relation-

ships; the film was hardly a shooin for a competitive home video market. Surrender Cinema, it ain't. "Our ultimate goal is to become the source for quality fantastic cinema," and I think we're off to a good start with THE OMEGA DIARY," says the director. "I have a huge appetite for sci-fi pictures. But too many low budget efforts try to mimic the super-budget blockbusters—they try to compete with them on their own level, and fail miserably. The decision to set the picture almost completely inside an 8' x 16' bunker was partially financial, but also forced us to focus on the characters and the conflicts that form the core of the picture."

"After the Berlin wall fell, and our world leaders started taking down these weapons of mass destruction that had been hanging over our heads forever, it felt like the whole world breathed a collective sigh of relief. But get a reality check on the present day. The government is spending more than ever on nuclear research of all kinds. And the former Soviet Union claims to have misplaced 80 or so nuclear weapons. Power hungry dictators and terrorists, willing to die to make a point, would like nothing better than to get their hands on

them—if they haven't already. As events in the last several years have demonstrated, the USA is not immune to attacks by terrorists. THE OMEGA DIARY focuses on only a handful of survivors. My goal was to make a story about individuals become responsibility starts and ends with the individual. The major theme in the picture is facing your problems head on and taking responsibility for the consequences of your actions. What if everybody did that?"

Shooting on the tiny set proved to be a problematic, with cameras conking out in the very cramped and hot quarters. "Some shots required six cast and three or four crew members on set at once," recalls Cooper. "Camera gear, a dolly with track and a tangle of cables made maneuvering a challenge. On the plus side, a lot of that atmosphere translated right to the screen."

With THE OMEGA DIARY behind her, Barlow continues to practice her craft: she's tutoring fourth and sixth graders "on the art of acting. This process is a way to keep fresh and new, always." The thespian's goals include an encore of her stage experience: "I've never acted in a Tennessee Williams play. Maggie the Cat is a dream role I have. I want to play all of the Tennessee Williams women, partly because I've been told I can't play them. I'd like to do Blanche DuBois—but I have to wait till I'm older. I just read my horseshoe. It says I'm 'ending an intense two-year cycle of work.' I've done several plays, two films, hosted UNSIGNED and taught acting classes. I've been offered another real good film role, and I'd like to make myself available for more work, but I'm taking it one day at a time. I might be pretty good now, but great is my eventual goal. I don't give up. I will be great, if it takes me till I'm 90." □



The three faces of Linda Carter: She embodied Vampirella for Thrust Comics (l), played a sexy water nymph in Brett Piper's *DRAGON* (c), My device scene concludes the film. It was a 2-hour shoot. (r), Linda Carter also modeled as Lady Death.



for her. Then it's a little bit of an intimidation. When her name was mentioned in the casting, I said, "Please, please get her. Her part is not huge, and she's not raving and ranting or doing things she has been known for in the past. It's a very subtle part, but she was such a class act." She didn't dive into the run-of-the-mill scripts, getting a movie a week kind of scenario. That may be because she's deep coast and not here. She doesn't take any shit. Her character is sort of an up and comer. Her office is sort of dilapidated. She doesn't dress totally great. She's downplayed. She's a beautiful woman, but we make her a little more normal than people are used to."

● Artist Dave Beck engaged Linda Carter to pose as Lady Death for Dark Millennium, a comic book franchise released in multiple installments. Cast in Brett Piper's *DRAGON*, Carter played "the naked, skull-faced dancer at the film's end. It took about three hours to shoot. I had to wear a black seg bra because, at the time, I was a blonde, which I'm not anymore. They had appliances made for me which was pretty neat because this was the first time that I had to wear makeup. For atmosphere, they had a bucket of dried ice suspended from the ceiling to have fog swirling over me."

● Let's cut to the chase: tap into www.carloscartagena.com right now. Pin-up artist Carlos Cartagena is the new millennium's Vargas. He applies a dichotomy to his images:

died in strapless bikinis and trim-potent lingerie, the renderings evoke '50s cheerily but are refurbished with a New Age delusion of vulnerability. Carrie Nadeh incarnates Sheena of the Jungle, with an abbreviated leopard skin bikini, steely expression and jet tights. Bonnie-Jill Lahti is rendered into a moored whose essential expression would prompt her banishment from Disneyland. Latin bombshell Angelic Almodarez is translated into a modern Barbieville, but benefit of her precursor's breezy bimbo demeanor.

A profusion of Playboy Playmates and models (Linda O'Neil, Suzie Simpson, Carrie Stevens, Alley Beggett et al.) have posed for the artist. Cartagena has experimented with nudos but he prefers a more

discreet sensuality. "Sometimes when you're on a beach, and you see an incredible looking gorgeous girl—and she's wearing a bathing suit—there's a sadness that comes out of that bathing suit. If I do nudos, I try to make it as gentle as possible. I try not to offend, but there's always somebody out there who will be offended."

So how does Cartagena define an artist? "When you have a passion and desire, and combine it with hours and hours of work, that equals skill or talent. I think that's how talent is developed. I don't think you're born with it. If you love something, and you put hours into it, you begin to develop what they later call talent. If you put the time and the passion into it, you can do what I do." □

Carlos Cartagena, the Prince of Pinup Pictorialism, is flanked by model/actress/ride (l-r) Michelle Leticia, Brenda Westgate, Marco Marconi & Linda O'Neil



FATALE ATTRACTIONS

continued from page 6

● Melissa Tomasi's screen visibility has lately been minimal, unless you count art house gigs (e.g. *SLUMS OF BEVERLY HILLS*). She's stepping back into the mainstream with her role as a psychiatrist in *DRIVEN* (aka *THE WATCHER*), a thriller from director Joe Charbono which is headlined by Kevin Reeves and James Spader but perhaps Tomasi prefers a declaration of filmmaking independence.

Charbono, recounting Tomasi's Oscar-winning role in *MY COUSIN VINNIE*, notes "That's the problem with Hollywood. When you win that statue, people are afraid of you a little bit. She obviously deserved it but I think it was a lot really quick,

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